

THE
BURIED TREASURE

BY
ERCKMANN CHATRIAN

CONTAINING

"STORIES OF THE RHINE" & "CLARIONET PLAYER"



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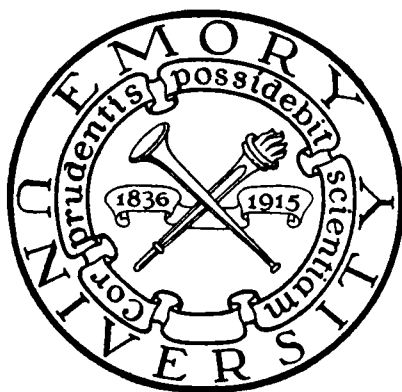
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THE BURIED TREASURE.



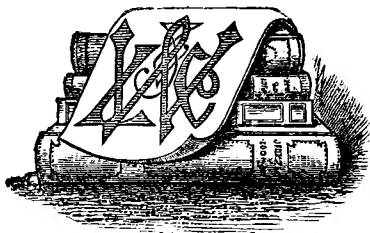
BURIED TREASURE

BY

MM. ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN.

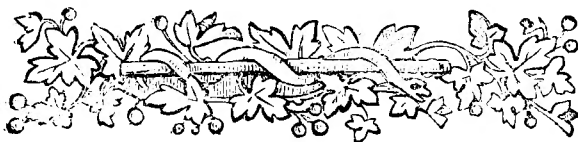
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THE BURIED TREASURE.

I.



ONE night, in the month of September, 1823, Furbach, the worthy and respectable bookseller of the Rue Neuhauser, Munich, awoke suddenly and in astonishment at hearing footsteps in the garret over his bedroom. Somebody was pacing to and fro in trouble of mind; one of the windows in the roof was opened, and long-drawn sighs were breathed into the silence.

At that moment the clock of the Jesuits' chapel struck one, and, underneath Monsieur Furbach's bedroom, horses clattered and stamped in their stable.

The garret was occupied by the coachman, Nicklausse, a tall, good-humoured fellow from Pitcherland, dry, wiry, an excellent manager of horses, and not without education, having had some little schooling at the seminary of Marienthal; but simple-minded and superstitious to such a degree that he constantly carried about with him, under his shirt, a small bronze cross, which he kissed every morning and evening, though he was over thirty years of age.

Monsieur Furbach listened: after awhile the window was closed, the footsteps were stilled, the coachman's bed creaked, and all was silent.

Ay, ay!" said the old bookseller, "the moon's at

the full to-night; Nicklausse is beating himself about the chest, and lamenting his sins, poor devil!"

And without troubling himself any further with the matter, he turned round on his pillow and went off to sleep again.

Next morning, about seven o'clock, Monsieur Furbach, his feet in his slippers, was quietly taking his breakfast, preparatory to descending to his shop, when two little taps sounded on his door.

"Come in!" he cried, considerably surprised at receiving so early a visit.

The door opened and Nicklausse appeared, dressed in a grey blouse, his head covered with a wide-brimmed mountaineer's felt hat, and his hand clutching a stout wild-apple cudgel, just as he had presented himself on first arriving from his village. He looked pale.

"Monsieur Furbach," said he, "I've come to ask you to give me my discharge. Thank Heaven! I'm at last going to be at ease, and able to help my grandmother Orchel, of Vangebourg."

"Have you come in for an inheritance?" asked the old bookseller.

"No, Monsieur Furbach, but I've had a dream. I dreamed of a treasure, between twelve and one o'clock, and I am going to lay my hand on it."

The good fellow spoke with so much conviction that Monsieur Furbach was completely taken aback.

"You've had a dream, eh?" he said.

"Yes, monsieur. I've seen the treasure as plainly as I see you, in a very low-roofed vault, in an old castle. There was the figure of a nobleman lying above it with joined hands, and a large iron pot on his head."

"But where was it, Nicklausse?"

"Ah! that I don't know. I shall first go in search of the castle; then I shall find the vault and the crowns. The gold pieces fill a coffin six feet long; I seem to see them now!"

The eyes of Nicklausse glittered in a strange fashion.

"Come, come, my poor Nicklausse—come, come!" cried old Furbach; "let us be reasonable. Sit down. A dream—very well, very well. In the time of Joseph, I don't say that dreams mayn't have meant something; but at this time of day things are different. Everybody dreams. I myself have dreamt a hundred times of riches, but, unfortunately, I have never found 'em. Think of what you are about; you are going to give up a good place, to run after a castle which perhaps has no existence."

"I have seen it," said the coachman. "It is a big castle falling into ruins: below it there is a village, a long, steep, winding road, a very old church. Many people still live in this part of the country, and a large river flows near."

"You've dreamed the whole of it, I've no doubt," said Monsieur Furbach, shrugging his shoulders.

A moment later, wishing to bring the man back to reason by some means or other, he demanded—

"Your vault—what was that like?"

"It resembled an oven."

"And you went down into it with a light, no doubt?"

"No, monsieur."

"But, if you had no light, how could you see the coffin, the knight, and the pieces of gold?"

"They were lighted by a ray of the moon."

"Come, that won't do! Does the moon shine in a vault? Your dream, you see, hasn't common sense."

Nicklausse began to lose his temper. He restrained himself, however, and said—

“I’ve seen it. I care nothing about all the rest; and, as to the knight, here he is,” he cried, opening his blouse, “here he is!”

He drew from his bosom the little bronze cross suspended from a ribbon, and laid it on the table with an air of ecstasy.

Monsieur Furbach, who was a great amateur of medals and antiquities, was surprised at the strange and truly valuable workmanship of this relic. He examined it closely, and discovered that it belonged to the twelfth century. In place of the effigy of the Saviour, on the centre limb was represented in high relief the figure of a knight with hands joined in the attitude of prayer. No date was upon it.

During this examination, Nicklausse anxiously followed the bookseller’s every gesture.

“It is very beautiful,” said Monsieur Furbach, “and I should not be altogether astonished at your having looked at it until you had come to believe it represented a knight keeping guard over a treasure; but, trust me the true treasure to be looked after is that of the Cross itself; the rest is not worth talking about.”

Nicklausse returned no answer; only after he had passed the ribbon over his neck, he said—

“I shall go—the Holy Virgin will enlighten me! When Heaven wishes to do good to us we ought to profit by it. You have always treated me well, Monsieur Furbach, it is true; but Heaven commands me to be gone. It is, besides, time for me to marry; and I have seen there, in my dream, a young girl who seemed born expressly to become my wife.”

"In what direction are you going?" asked the bookseller, who could not help smiling at such simplicity.

"Whichever direction the wind blows from," replied Nicklausse; "that's the surest way."

"You are quite decided?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very well; then we must settle your account. I am sorry to lose so good a servant; but I have no right to hinder you from following your vocation."

They descended together to the counting-house, and, after consulting his books, Monsieur Furbach counted out to Nicklausse two hundred and fifty Austrian florins, the accumulation of his savings, with interest, for six years. After which the worthy man wished him good-speed, and looked out for another coachman.

II.

FOR a long time the old bookseller related this strange story, laughing heartily at the simplicity of the folks of Pitcherland, and recommending them to his friends and acquaintances as excellent servants.

Some years later, Monsieur Furbach having married his daughter, Mademoiselle Anna Furbach, to the rich bookseller, Rubeneck, of Leipsic, retired from business. But he had so firmly contracted the habit of working, that although he was sixty years of age, inaction very soon became insupportable to him, and he made several pleasure-journeys into Italy, France, and Belgium.

In the early autumn days of 1838 he visited the banks of the Rhine. He was a little keen-eyed old man, with red cheeks and a carriage still erect. He was to be seen

trotting about the deck of the steamer, his nose in the air, his overcoat tightly buttoned, an umbrella under his arm, and a silk cap drawn over his ears, chatting and asking about everything, taking notes, and freely consulting his guide-book.

One morning, between Frisenheim and Neubourg, after having spent the night in the cabin of the dampfschiff, in company with thirty other passengers—women, children, tourists, tradesmen—heaped upon the benches, Monsieur Furbach, happy to escape from such a vapour-bath, went upon deck at break of day.

It was about four o'clock in the morning, and a heavy mist hung upon the river. The steam roared, the vessel chopped slowly along, a few distant lights trembled in the midst, and at times loud noises arose amid the darkness; but dominating all was the voice of old Rhine, recounting the eternal legend of the generations which had passed away, the crimes, the exploits, the grandeur and the fall of those ancient margraves, whose lairs were becoming distinguishable in the awakening light.

Leaning thoughtful-eyed against the side of the vessel, the old bookseller saw these memories defile before him; some sparks flew into the air; a lantern swung at the end of its cord; the breeze threw jets of spray before it. Other passengers glided like shadows up from the cabin.

Monsieur Furbach having turned his head, perceived a dark mass of ruins on the right bank of the stream, and a number of small houses, ranged step-like at the foot of vast ramparts; a flying bridge swept the frothy river with its long dragging rope.

He went under the lantern, opened his guide-book and read : “ *Vieux Brisach*, *Brisacum* and *Brisacus mons*, founded by *Drusus*; formerly the capital of *Brisgau*, passed for being one of the strongest towns in Europe: the key of Germany. *Bernard V de Zoehringen* built the fortified castle. *Frederic Barbarossa* caused the relics of *Saint Gervais* and *Saint Protais* to be transported there, into the church of *Saint Etienne*. *Gustave Horn*, a Swede, tried to take it in 1633, after having gained great advantages over the Imperialists: he failed. *Brisach* was ceded to France by the treaty of *Westphalia*; it was given back at the peace of *Ruyswick*, in exchange for *Strasbourg*. It was burnt by the French in 1793; its fortifications were demolished in 1814.”

“ So,” said he to himself, “ this is the Old *Brisach* of the Counts of *Eberstein*, of *Osgau*, of *Zoehringen*, of *Suabia*, and of *Austria*. I can’t go by *that* without seeing it.”

A few moments later he descended, with his luggage, from the steamer into a boat, and the dampfschiff continued her passage towards *Bâle*.

There is not, perhaps, on either bank of the *Rhine*, a site more strange than the ancient capital of *Brisgau*, with its dismantled castle, its thousand-coloured walls of brick, rubble, and mud, planted fifteen or sixteen hundred feet above the stream. It is no longer a town, and yet it is not a ruin. The dead old town is overrun by hundreds of rustic cottages, that press upon its flanks, scale its bastions, and hang on to its fissures, into which the hungry and tattered population eat their way, like gnats and mosquitoes, and the thousand insects with nippers and borers, that take up their

lodgings in old oaks, and split, dry up, and reduce them to powder.

Above thatched roofs, ranged against the ramparts, still stands the gate of the fortress, with its sculptured coat of arms, its portcullis and drawbridge. Wide breeches allow the débris to stream down by the side of it; bramble, moss, and ivy join their destructive efforts to those of men! All is falling, all is passing away!

Vine-stems have taken possession of the embrasures, the goatherd and his goats boldly place themselves on the cornices, and, strange to see, the women of the village, the girls, and old gossips, put their faces out from a thousand holes made in the castle-walls; every cellar of the old fortress has been turned into a commodious dwelling-place, all that had to be done was to put skylights and windows into the ramparts. Shirts, red or blue gowns, all the rags, in fact, of these households, are seen fluttering in the air from their summits. Above all still stand a few solid edifices, some gardens, some large oaks, and the Cathedral of Saint Etienne, so much venerated by Barbarossa.

Throw over all these objects the grey tints of morning twilight, unroll below the scarce-visible expanse of the roaring river, picture to yourself rows of barrels and boxes on the broad stones of the jetty, and you will realise the impression made upon Monsieur Furbach as he set foot on the shore.

In the midst of a mass of packages he perceived a man with bare chest, and hair smoothed flat to his temples, sitting on the edge of a truck, the yoke upon his shoulders.

“Does monsieur stop at Old Brisach? Does monsieur

put up at the Schlossgarten?" inquired this man, eagerly.

"Yes, my good fellow; you may take charge of my luggage."

There was no need to repeat the invitation. The boatman received his twelve pfennings, and the traveller began the ascent to the ancient castle.

III.

As the daylight increased in power the immense ruin gradually detached itself from the darkness, and its thousand picturesque details revealed themselves with strange distinctness. Here, on a partly demolished tower, formerly the signal-station, a flight of pigeons had taken up their abode; they were tranquilly preening themselves in the loop-holes whence, in other days, archers let fly their deadly arrows. In another place, an early-rising weaver pushed out of a donjon window his hanks of flax to dry in the open air at the end of long poles. Vine-dressers climbed the steep sides of the ascent; the cries of some martens pierced the silence: they were certain to abound in the ruins.

At the end of about a quarter of an hour, Monsieur Furbach and his guide reached a wide winding roadway paved with flints, black and slippery as iron, bounded by a breast-high wall, the curve of which was carried up to the platform. It was the ancient advance guard of Old Brisach. From the top of this roadway, near the gate of Gontran the Miser, leaning over the low wall, Monsieur Furbach looked down upon the innumerable cottages descending step-like to the river-

bank ; their back yards, stairs, and worm-eaten exterior galleries, their roofs of shingle, thatch, and planks, and their little smoking chimneys. Housewives lighting their fires on the hearth, undressed children moving about the inside of these cottages, men blacking their boots ; a cat wandering on the highest roof-peak ; in a poultry-yard, six hundred feet below, some fowls scratching in a dunghill, and through the fallen roof of an old barn a litter of rabbits, their backs raised and their tails cocked up, frisking in the shade. All these things presented themselves to view, even in the dreariest nooks ; human life, manners, habits, family pleasures and miseries, displayed themselves without reticence or mystery.

Yet, for the first time in his life perhaps, Monsieur Furbach found a mystery in these things : a feeling of undefinable alarm glided in upon his mind. Was it the multiplicity of the relations existing between all these beings, of which he could give no explanation to himself ? Was it a feeling of the eternal cause presiding in the development of these existences ? Was it the dull melancholy of these ramparts hastening to their destruction under the efforts of this infinite number of creatures ? I know not. He himself could not have told ; but he felt that another world in some way co-existed with the world about him ; that shadows came and went as aforetime in the domain, while over all there was the life, the movement, the activity of the flesh. He felt afraid, and hastened after his truck. The keen air of the platform, on leaving the winding road, dispelled these strange impressions. While crossing the terrace, he saw, to his right, the ancient grey-red cathedral, still unshaken on its granite base as

in the time of the Crusades; to the left, some neat-looking private houses; a young girl giving chickweed to her birds, and an old baker in a dust-coloured jacket smoking at the door of his shop; in front, at the further extremity of the upland, the Schlossgarten Hotel, its white front standing out from the green background of a park. It was there that tourists going from Fribourg to Brisgau put up. It was, indeed, one of those excellent German hotels, simple, elegant, and comfortable, worthy to entertain even a travelling milord.

Monsieur Furbach entered the sonorous hall, where a pretty chambermaid received him, and had his luggage carried into a handsome bedroom on the first floor. There the old bookseller washed, shaved himself, and changed his shirt; after which, fresh, cheerful, and with a good appetite, he descended to the large public room to take his coffee according to his custom.

He had been about half an hour in this room—a spacious salle, hung with white paper ornamented with bunches of flowers, the floor sanded, high windows of shining glass, opening on to the terrace—and having finished his breakfast, was getting ready to start on a tour of inspection in the neighbourhood, when a tall man in a black coat, clean shaven and fresh-looking, a napkin under his arm, the master of the hotel in fact, entered, casting an eye on the tables, covered with their white damask cloths, and advanced gravely towards Monsieur Furbach, bowing as he did so with a ceremonious air; then looking up at him, he uttered an exclamation of surprise—

“Seigneur Dieu! is it possible? My old master?”
Then with outstretched hands and eager voice, he

cried — “Monsieur Furbach, don’t you recognise me?”

“It’s Nicklausse!”

“Yes, Nicklausse,” cried the landlord of the hotel; “yes, it’s me. Ah, monsieur! if I dared——”

Monsieur Furbach had risen.

“Do not be afraid,” said he, smiling. “I am happy, very happy, Nicklausse, to see you again so well off. Let us embrace, if it will be any pleasure to you.”

And they hugged each other like old comrades.

Nicklausse wept; the servants flocked in; the good landlord rushed to the door at the end of the room, crying—

“Wife! children! come and see here! Make haste! My old master is here! Come quickly!”

A young woman of thirty, fresh, graceful, and handsome, a tall boy of eight or nine years old, and another somewhat younger, appeared.

“It’s my master!” cried Nicklausse. “Monsieur Furbach, here is my wife—here are my children. Ah! if you would only bless them!”

The old bookseller had never blessed anybody, but he very willingly kissed the young wife and the little ones also, the younger of whom set up a-crying, under the belief that something distressing was the matter, while the other stared wonderstruck with all his eyes.

“Ah! monsieur,” said the young wife, all flushed and agitated, “how many times my husband has spoken of you to me—of your goodness, of all he owes to you!”

“Yes,” interrupted Nicklausse, “a hundred times I have been minded to write to you, monsieur; but I had so many things to tell you that required explanation. In short, you must forgive me.”

"I forgive you with all my heart, my dear Nicklausse," cried the old bookseller. "Be sure that I am happy to know of your good fortune, though I know nothing of how it has come to you."

"You shall know all about it," replied the landlord; "this evening — to-morrow — I'll tell you the whole story. It is the Lord that has protected me! It is to Him I owe all! It's almost a miracle, isn't it, Fridoline?"

The young woman made a sign of assent.

"Well, well, all is for the best," said Monsieur Furbach, reseating himself; "you must allow me to spend a day or two in your hotel, to renew our acquaintance."

"Ah, monsieur, you are at home!" cried Nicklausse; "I'll go with you to Fribourg, and show you all the curiosities of the country; I'll conduct you myself."

The warm regard of these good people was not to be withstood; Monsieur Furbach was touched even to tears by it. During the whole of that day and the day following Nicklausse did the honours of Old Brisach and its environs. Whether he would or not, Nicklausse himself drove him about in a carriage; and as Nicklausse was the richest proprietor in the country, as he possessed the finest vines, the fattest pastures in the district, and had money invested on all sides, the astonishment of Brisach may be imagined at seeing him driving a stranger about in this manner: Monsieur Furbach passed for some prince travelling incognito. As to the service of the hotel, as to the good cheer, the wines and other accessories of the kind, I say nothing; all was splendid; the old bookseller could not but admit that he had never been treated more grandly,

and it was not without impatience that he awaited the explanation of the "miracle," as Nicklausse called it. The dream of his old domestic recurred to his memory, and appeared to him the only explanation possible of a fortune so rapidly acquired.

IV.

At length, on the third day, towards nine o'clock in the evening, after supper, the old master and his coachman, finding themselves alone with some bottles of old Rudesheim before them, looked long and expectingly at one another. Nicklausse was about to commence his confidences when a servant entered to clear the table.

"Go to bed, Kasper," said he, "you can clear away these things in the morning. Only lock and bolt the outer door."

When the domestic was gone, Nicklausse rose, opened one of the windows of the room to freshen the air, then, gravely reseating himself, commenced his communication in these terms:—

"You remember, Monsieur Furbach, the dream that made me leave your service, in 1828. For a long while that dream pursued me; at one time I saw myself pulling down an old wall at the foot of a ruin; at another I descended the well of a winding staircase till I reached a sort of postern, and tugged at an iron ring in one of the paving-stones till I was exhausted with fatigue.

"This dream made me very unhappy, but when I had raised the flag-stone, and seen the cellar, the knight, the treasure, all my distresses were forgotten. I felt myself already master of the wealth, and I was

dazzled by it. I said to myself, ‘Nicklausse, the Lord has chosen to elevate you to the pinnacle of honours and glory! How happy your grandmother Orchel will be to see you return to the village in a coach and four! And the others — old schoolmaster Yeri, sacristan Omacht, and all the people who said from morning to night that I should never do anything, how they will open their eyes, and what long faces they will pull! Ha! ha! ha!’

“I pictured to myself these things and others like them, that filled my heart to overflow with satisfaction, and redoubled my desire to become possessed of the treasure. But when once I was in the Rue Neuhauser, my bag on my back and my stick in my hand, and I had really to take the road to the castle, you could not believe, monsieur, how embarrassed I found myself.

“I was at the corner of your shop, seated on a stone, looking to see from which side the wind was blowing. Unfortunately there was no wind that day: the weather-cocks were all quite still, some pointing to the right, others to the left. And all the streets that crossed each other before my eyes seemed to say—‘This is the way you must go!—No, this way!’

“What was I to do?

“I reflected till the perspiration ran down my back; at last, to give myself some fresh ideas, I went into the Coq Rouge, facing the Little Arcades, to get a drink of wine. I had taken good care to fasten my money inside a leathern belt under my blouse, for at the Coq Rouge, which stands at the beginning of Trois Copeaux alley, there are a good many worthy fellows who would have been happy to have relieved me of it.

“The low and narrow tap-room, lit by two casements

looking into a back yard, was filled with smoke. Men in smock-frocks, blouses, battered hats, or threadbare caps, moved about like shadows, and from time to time a match shone in the midst of the cloud; a red nose, downcast eyes, a hanging lip, became for an instant visible, then all again became dim.

“The tavern clattered like a drum.

“I seated myself in a corner, my stick between my knees, a can of drink before me, and till nightfall I stayed there, with open mouth and staring eyes, looking at my hat, that seemed to me painted on the wall.

“About eight o'clock I became hungry, and called for a saveloy and another can of wine. They lit the lamp, and two or three hours afterwards I woke as from a dream; Fox, the tavern-keeper, was standing before me, and said—

“‘It's three kreutzer a night; you can go up to bed.’

“I was conducted to the top of the house, where I found a straw mattress spread on the floor, and the centre beam of the roof immediately over it. I heard two tipsy men in the next attic grumbling that they could not stand upright in it. For myself, I was doubled up under the roof, my head against the tiles.

“I did not close an eye all that night, as much through fear of being robbed as from the effect of my dream, and the desire of setting out, without knowing which way to go.

“At four o'clock the window set in the roof began to turn grey; the other occupants of the attics were snoring like organ-pipes. I descended the stairs backwards and escaped into the street. Hurrying away, I tapped my waist-belt more than a hundred times, to assure

myself of its safety. The daylight grew stronger; some servant girls were sweeping the pavements, and two or three watchmen, with sticks under their arms, were pacing the still empty streets. I was quickening my pace, breathing freely the fresh morning air, had reached the Stuttgard Gate, and could already see the trees of the country beyond, when it crossed my mind that I had forgotten to pay for my lodging. It was only three miserable kreutzer: Fox was the greatest rascal in Munich, harbouring all the vagabonds of the city, but the idea that such a man might take me for one of his own kind stopped me short.

“I have often heard say, Monsieur Furbach, that virtue is rewarded and crime punished in this world; unfortunately, from having seen so much of the contrary, I can no longer believe it. It ought rather to be said that, from the moment a man is under the protection of invisible beings, all that he does, whether through courage or cowardice, and even against his will, turns to his advantage. It may be regretted that veritable robbers often have such chances, but no matter; if well-off people were always happy, men might make themselves well-off by pocket-picking, and the Lord did not intend that.

“In short, cursing my ill star, I went back to the Coq Rouge. Fox was shaving himself in front of a bit of glass placed on the edge of his mantelpiece. When he heard me say that I had returned to pay him his three kreutzer, the fellow looked me through and through, as if he suspected some hidden diabolical trick; but after duly reflecting, and drying his beard, he held out his hand, thinking that three kreutzer are always worth taking. A fat servant wench, with

pumpkin cheeks, who was washing the tables at the moment, did not appear less astonished than he was.

“I was turning to leave the place, when my eyes fell on a row of little smoke-covered frames, hanging round the room. The windows had been opened to let in fresh air, and there was somewhat more light than on the day before, but that did not prevent the room being still murky. I have often thought since that at certain moments the eyes throw light on what they look upon, as if by an interior light, that warns us to be attentive. However that may be, I had already one foot in the alley, when the sight of these frames made me return. They contained engravings of views on the banks of the Rhine, engravings a hundred years old, dirty and fly-stained. Well—strange as it may seem—I saw them all at one glance, and amongst the number I recognised the ruins I had seen in my dream. I turned pale; for a moment I had not strength to mount upon a bench to look at the print more closely. Before a minute had passed, I had ceased to be in doubt: the three towers in front, the village under it, the river five or six hundred feet below, all were there! I read at the foot of the print, in old German characters: ‘Views of the Rhine,—Brisach.’ And, in one corner: ‘Frederich sculpsit, 1728.’ It was just a hundred years old.

“The tavern-keeper observed me.

“‘Aha!’ said he, ‘you are looking at Brisach; that’s in my part of the country. The French burned the town, the beggars!’

“I came down from the bench and asked—

“‘You come from Brisach?’

“‘No, I belong to Mulhausen, some leagues from

that place—a famous country; in good years, they drink wine there at two kreutzer the litre.’

“‘Is that far from here?’

“‘At least a hundred leagues. One might almost fancy you had a notion of going there.’

“‘It is very possible I may have.’

“I went out, and he followed me to the door, from which he jeeringly called after me—

“‘Here!—I say! Before you set off for Mulhausen, try if you can recollect anything else you owe me!’

“I made no answer. I was on the way to Brisach. I saw there, in the dark depths of a vault, masses of gold. I already embraced them, took up handfuls of pieces and let them fall; they uttered a dull sound and little peals of laughter that made my blood turn cold.”

V

“THIS, Monsieur Furbach, was how, after taking my departure from Munich, I safely reached Old Brisach. It was on the 3rd of October, 1828; I shall remember it all my life. That day I had started on my road early in the morning. Towards nine o’clock in the evening I came in sight of the first houses of the village; it poured with rain; my felt hat, my blouse, my shirt, were all soaked through; a breeze from the Swiss glaciers made my teeth chatter; I seem still to hear the rain falling, the wind hissing, and the Rhine roaring. Not a light shone in Old Brisach. An old woman had directed me up to the Schlossgarten; I had succeeded in finding the steps, and ascended, groping my way, and saying to myself: ‘Heavenly Father, if you do not wish me to perish here, but will accomplish

towards a poor soul one quarter of your Divine promises, come to my aid !'

"For all that the water went on splashing, the foliage by the side of the slope shivered, and the wind hissed more fiercely the higher I mounted.

"After groping my way for twenty minutes along that winding road, in danger of falling over the side at every step, I saw before me a lantern, slowly advancing : it was dripping with rain, and cast its rays on the old wall.

" 'Hilloa ! who goes there ?' cried a cracked voice.

" 'A traveller, on his way up to the Schlossgarten,' I replied.

" 'Very good—we'll see.'

"And the light, flickering and staggering, came towards me.

"Above it advanced a dull face, with a flat nose and livid and wrinkled cheeks, surmounted by an old sable cap, from which the whole of the fur had been worn away. A long emaciated arm raised the lantern to the level of my hat ; for a few seconds we looked at each other in silence. He had clear grey eyes, like a cat, and eyebrows and beard as white as tow ; he wore a great-coat of goat-skin, and grey canvas trousers : it was old Zulpick, the ropemaker, a strange being, living alone in his vault at the foot of the tower of Gontran the Miser. After spinning his ropes all day in the little Holly alley behind the church of Saint Etienne, without returning to the passers who wished him good-day any answer beyond a silent nod, he retreated into his dwelling-place, singing through his nose tunes of the times of Barbarossa, and prepared his supper himself ; then, with his two elbows resting on the sill of his casement,

he gazed out at the Rhine, Alsatia, and the summits of the Swiss mountains, for hours together. He was met sometimes in the night, walking among the ruins, and sometimes, but rarely, he went down to drink kirschenwasser with the boatmen and raftsmen, at Daddy Korb's house on the jetty, facing the bridge. He would then speak of ancient times and relate old chronicles to these good fellows, who said among themselves: 'Where the deuce has old Zulpick learned all this, he who has done nothing all his life but twist ropes?'

"Zulpick never failed to attend high mass on Sundays; but, with singular vanity, he always placed himself in the choir, in the place of the ancient dukes; and, stranger still, the inhabitants of Brisach accepted as quite natural in the old ropemaker what they would have severally blamed in any one else.

"Such was the man with the lantern.

"He looked at me for a long time through the rain that streaked the air, and in spite of my growing impatience.

"At length he said in a dry tone—

" 'There is your way.'

"And, with bent back and thoughtful manner, he continued his downward road towards Daddy Korb's public-house, muttering to himself.

"As for me, wishing to take advantage of the last rays of the lantern, I climbed rapidly up to the terrace, where a light seemed to me to start from the ground: it was that of the Schlossgarten. A servant was still up; I reached the door of the hotel and knocked; the door was opened to me, and the voice of Katel cried—

" 'Ah! Seigneur Dieu! what weather for travellers! what weather! Come in, come in!'

“I entered the hall, and she looked at me.

“‘You’ll want to change everything on your back, and you are not rich, I can see. Never mind, come with me into the kitchen; you shall have a good drink of wine and a piece of bread to eat, for the love of God. I’ll try and find you an old shirt, and you shall have a warm bed.’

“Thus spoke that excellent creature, whom I thanked from the bottom of my soul.

“Once seated by the side of the fire, I supped like a veritable wolf; Katel raising her hands to heaven and watching me wonderingly. When I had finished she led me to one of the servants’ rooms, where, after undressing myself, I was quickly sleeping under the protection of the Lord.

“I little thought then that I was going to sleep under my own roof. Who can foresee such things? What are men without the protection of the invisible beings?—but, being under their protection, what may not one hope for? Such thoughts as these, however, were far from my mind.

“Waking next day about seven o’clock, I heard the leaves rustling outside. Looking out of my window, which commanded a view of the park, I saw the dead leaves of the broad-spreading plane-trees dropping one by one on the deserted walks, and the mist spreading its grey clouds over the Rhine. My clothes were still damp, but I put them on all the same, and, a few moments later, Katel presented me to old Michel Durlach, the proprietor of the hotel, a man of eighty, with baggy eyelids and his face seamed with innumerable wrinkles. He wore a jacket of brown velvet with silver buttons, blue cloth breeches, black silk stockings, round-

toed shoes with wide old-fashioned copper buckles ; he was seated beside the china stove in the principal room.

“ As I had asked him to give me employment—for I had made up my mind to remain at Old Brisach—after having looked at me for a few moments he requested to see my livret, which he gravely set himself to read, with his big spectacles fixed on his blue nose, that looked like the bill of a crow. Every now and then he nodded and murmured—

“ ‘ Good !—good !’

“ At length, raising his eyes, he said with a benevolent smile—

“ ‘ You may stay here, Nicklausse ; you can replace Kasper, who leaves the day after to-morrow to rejoin his regiment. You will have to go down to the landing-place every morning and evening to see if there are any travellers, and bring up their luggage. I will give you six florins a month, with food and lodging ; the generosity of the travellers will double your earnings, and, later on, if we are satisfied with you, we’ll see whether something better can’t be done for you. Are you content with the terms ?’

“ I accepted willingly, for, as I have told you, I was resolved to remain at Old Brisach ; but what confirmed me in my resolution was the arrival of Mademoiselle Fridoline Durlach, whose large blue eyes and sweet smile carried away my heart. Fridoline, fresh, smiling, beautiful flaxen hair falling in wide plaits upon her snowy neck, a graceful form, hands rather large and plump, loving-voiced, such as I had seen her in my dream, scarce twenty, and already sighing, like all young girls, for the fortunate hour of marriage, such I then saw her.

“But on thinking of what I was, Monsieur Furbach—a poor domestic, dressed in a grey blouse, harnessed every evening to my truck like a beast of burthen, my head bent down, panting and melancholy, I did not dare to believe in the promises of the invisible beings; I dared not say to myself, ‘Here is your betrothed, she who has been promised to you!’ No, I dared not dwell on that idea; I blushed at it; I trembled at it; I accused myself of folly. Fridoline was so beautiful, and myself so destitute of everything!

“In spite of that, from the moment of my arrival at the Schlossgarten, Fridoline had felt an affectionate regard for me, or rather commiseration. Often in the evening, after the hard work of the day, when I sat resting beside the kitchen fire, downcast, with my hands on my knees and thoughtful-eyed, she would enter noiselessly like a fairy, and while Katel was washing up the plates and dishes, would look smilingly at me and whisper—

“‘You are very tired, are you not, Nicklausse? The weather has been bad to-day. That heavy shower wetted you through. You work very hard, I often think—yes, very hard; but have patience, my good Nicklausse, a little patience; as soon as there is another place vacant in the hotel you shall have it. You are not fit to drag a truck; it wants a stronger and rougher kind of man than you.’

“And all the time she was speaking she looked at me with eyes so tender, so compassionate, that my heart trembled under their look; my eyes filled with tears; I should have liked to throw myself at her feet, to take her hands in mine, to press my lips upon them, and weep as I did so. Respect alone restrained me.

As to saying to her, 'I love you!'—I should never, never, have dared to do it. And yet Fridoline was to be my wife!"

Here Nicklausse suspended his recital—almost choked by emotion. Old Furbach himself indeed felt moved; he watched the good fellow weeping at these sweet memories; these tears of happiness touched him deeply, but he found not a word to say.

VI.

At the end of a few minutes, Nicklausse's emotion being somewhat calmed, he went on—

"You can easily imagine, Monsieur Furbach, that during the winter of 1828, which was very long and severe, my fixed idea never left me. Picture to yourself a poor devil, a yoke about his neck, dragging his truck, morning and evening, down and up that immense roadway, that seems endless, between the bank of the Rhine and the terrace above. You know that flight of steps, on which all the winds of Switzerland and Alsatia pour down; how many times did I stop midway to gaze on those vast ruins, with the black cabins beneath, saying to myself, 'The treasure is in the midst of that—somewhere—I don't know where—but it is there! If I had found it, instead of having the rain beating in my face, my feet in the mud, and a rope about my waist, I should be seated before a good table, drinking good wine, and listening to the wind, rain, and hail storm out of doors, while thanking God for His bounties. And—more than all that—I should see a sweet face smiling on me!'

“These thoughts put me in a fever; my eyes pierced the walls—I probed with a glance the depths of the abyss, I sapped the foundation of every tower, the thickness of which I calculated from that of the upper portions.

“‘Ah!’ cried I to myself, ‘I’ll find it—I’ll find it—I must find it!’

“A strange sort of attraction always drew my eyes towards the donjon of Gontran the Miser, facing the ascent. It is a tall stone building, crowned with heavy battlements, which stand out in strong relief on the Hunevir side. The donjon of Rodolphe stands close by it. Between the two is hung the drawbridge of the place, these towers forming, as it were, the jambs of a colossal gate.

“One circumstance more than all attached me to the tower of Gontran; it was that, at half its height, on a broad rough-hewn stone, is sculptured a cross surmounted by a helmet, and two gauntlets nailed in place of the Saviour’s hands.

“You have not forgotten, Monsieur Furbach, the little cross I used always to carry about me, and which I showed to you the day I left your service; that cross appeared to me similar to the one on Gontran’s tower; the helmet and the gauntlets were alike; and, moreover, every time I passed the tower I was seized with a fit of trembling. I felt overpowered by some strange force; fear took possession of me, and, in spite of my desire to penetrate this mystery, a death-like terror made me fly.

“When I was in my chamber in the evening, I looked on myself as a coward, and promised myself to have more courage next day; but the idea of finding myself

face to face with beings of an unknown world always overthrew my strongest resolutions.

“ Besides, at the foot of this famous tower, in a vault of the halle d’armes, lived the old ropemaker Zulpick, who from the time of my arrival at Brisach had watched my every action. What did this man want with me? Did he suspect my projects? Was he himself possessed by the same instincts? Had he any clue? I could not divest myself of a vague apprehension on meeting him; between Zulpick and myself there evidently existed some sort of bond. What was its nature? I could not tell, and stood upon my guard.

“ For three months I went on dragging my truck without venturing to take any fixed resolution. I became discouraged. It sometimes seemed to me that the spirit of darkness had been laughing at my credulity. I returned every night to the Schlossgarten, weighed down by an indescribable melancholy. Katel and Fridoline did not fail to ask me the cause of my sadness, and promised me better fortune. I was visibly growing thinner every day.

“ Winter had come; the cold was excessive, especially in the clear nights, when multitudes of stars filled the sky, and the brilliant moon threw upon the snow the shadows of the great trees, with their thousand interlaced branches.

“ Steamboats did not then exist. Large sailing-vessels performed the passenger service; they arrived at eight, nine, ten, eleven o’clock, often at midnight, according as the wind was more or less favourable. I had to wait at the landing-place, in the midst of the bales, the snow slowly falling and covering me like a block of stone; and when the vessel had passed I often

returned to the hotel without any luggage, for travellers in the winter are rare.

“One January evening I was sadly wending my way back. As a good deal of snow had fallen my truck made no noise. I had reached midway, and stopped, with my elbows on the low wall, at my usual spot, to gaze at Gontran’s Tower. The weather had cleared up. Below me slept the village. The trees, covered with frost and snow, glittered in the moonlight. For a long time I stood looking down at the white roofs, the little dark yards, with their pickaxes, their shovels, their harrows, their ploughs, their frays of straw hanging to the sheds, their windows, against which the snow had piled itself. Not a sound came up to me, not a breath, and I said to myself, ‘They are all sleeping; they are in no want of treasures! My God! what are we? Is there any need for us to be rich? Do not the rich die, as well as the poor? Cannot the poor live, loving their wives and children, warming themselves in the sun when it shines, and at the fireside when the weather is cold, as well as the rich? Do they require to drink the best wine every day to make them happy? And when all have dragged themselves for a few days on earth—looking at the sky, the stars, the moon, the blue river, the verdure of the fields and woods; plucking fruit from the bushes; pressing the grapes, saying to her they love, “You are the most beautiful, the gentlest, the tenderest of women. I shall love you for ever!” and dandling their little ones in their hands, kissing them, laughing at their chirping—when they have done all these things—which make up the happiness, the poor happiness, of this world!—do we not all, one after the other, descend, in white robes or in tatters, into the

same dark cavern, whence there is no return, and where one knows nothing more of what is passing? Is there any need of treasures, Nicklausse, for all that? Reflect, and calm your mind. Go back to your village; cultivate your little field, your grandmother's field; marry Grédel, Christine, or Lotchen; a fat, jolly girl, if you like; a thin and melancholy one, if you prefer it. Heaven knows there is no lack of them! Follow the example of your father and grandfather: go to mass; listen to monsieur le curé, and when the time comes for you to follow in the road all other people have gone, you will be blessed, and a hundred years from this time you will have become one of those excellent people whose bones are dug up with respect, and of whom it will be said—"Ah! in those days there were men. Now there are none but scamps to be seen!"

"Thus in a dreamy mood I leaned on the wall, admiring the silence of the village, the stars, the moon, and the ruins, and mourning for the treasure I could not have.

"But suddenly, after I had been there a few minutes, something moved upon the platform opposite me, but three hundred feet above where I stood. A head slowly peered out, casting a look on the river, the landing-place, and along the steep winding road.

"I ducked down; my truck was hidden in a turning of the wall.

"It was Zulpick. He was bareheaded, and, as the moon was shining with all its brightness, in spite of the distance, I could see that the old ropemaker was moved by some strange idea. His wan cheeks were drawn in; his large eyes, overhung with white brows, sparkled; yet he appeared calm. After looking about for a long

time, he put on his old sable cap, which he had taken off to enable himself to see the better, and descended the steep path by Rudolph's Tower, where I speedily lost sight of him among the bastions.

“What was he doing in the midst of the ruins at such an hour? The idea suddenly flashed upon my mind that he was seeking for the treasure. Calm as I had been a moment before, I felt a rush of blood to my face. I slipped the yoke over my shoulders, and ran with all my might, the wheels of my truck making no noise as they passed over the snow. In a few minutes I reached an outhouse belonging to the Schlossgarten, seized a pickaxe, and ran back, following the track of the old ropemaker. At the end of a quarter of an hour I was in the castle-moat, tracking his footsteps in the snow. I pressed forward so quickly that, suddenly, at the turn of a heap of ruins, I found myself nose to nose with Zulpick, who carried a heavy crowbar, which he tightly grasped with both hands as he looked me in the face. He stood fixed as a statue, and there was a grandeur in his attitude that astonished me. He might have been taken for an old knight. The surprise took my breath away; but soon recovering myself, I said—

“‘Good evening, Monsieur Zulpick. How goes it with you this evening? The cold's a little sharp.’

“Just then the clock of the old cathedral of Saint Etienne struck midnight, and every grave and solemn stroke of the bell resounded in the bastion. As the last stroke rang out, Zulpick demanded—

“‘What have you come here for?’

“‘Eh?’ said I, embarrassed. ‘I've come for the same purpose as yourself.’

“Then, in a grave tone, he cried—

“‘By what right do you lay claim to the treasure of Gontran the Miser? Speak!’

“‘Aha!’ I replied; ‘it appears that *you* know——’

“My heart beat violently.

“‘Yes, I have read you; I have expected you.’

“‘You have expected me?’

“But without answering me, he went on—

“‘By what right do you claim anything here?’

“‘By what right do *you* claim anything, Daddy Zulpick? If there is a treasure, why should it be yours more than mine?’

“‘It’s different with me—very different,’ said he; ‘for fifty years I have been in search of it.’

“And placing his hand upon his breast with a convinced air, he added—

“‘The treasure is mine. I have acquired it at the cost of blood, and for eight centuries I have been deprived of it.’

“I thought then that he was mad; but guessing what was in my mind, he said—

“‘I am not mad. Show me my wealth, since the knowledge of its existence has come to you from on high, and I will give you a good part of it.’

“We were at the foot of Rudolph’s Tower, from which the old ropemaker had been endeavouring to break away one of the stones. A great number of other stones were piled close by.

“‘He does not know the place,’ I said to myself. ‘The treasure is not here, I am sure of it. It must be inside Gontran’s Tower.’

“And without replying to his question, I said to him—

“‘Courage, Daddy Zulpick! We’ll talk about this matter some other time.’

“I returned up the road that led to the terrace. While I was going along I recollected that the only entrance into Gontran’s Tower was through the vault inhabited by Zulpick. Turning round, I called to him—

“‘We’ll talk about it again to-morrow.’

“‘Very well!’ he cried in a loud voice.

“He followed me for a considerable distance, with bowed head and downcast air.

“A few minutes later I was in my bedroom, and laid down to rest with a feeling of hope and courage such as I had not felt for a long time.”

VII.

“THAT night my dream, which had been growing fainter day by day, reappeared to me with imposing grandeur. It was no longer only the knight stretched upon the bronze cross I saw, but it was a complete, strange, and colossal history that slowly unfolded itself to my eyes. The great bell of the ancient cathedral of Saint Etienne tolled. The heavy red stones of the vast building, its vaults, its arches, and its spires trembled to their granite foundations. An immense crowd, all draped in cloth of gold and jewels, priests and nobles, pressed each other on the platform of Old Brisach, not the Old Brisach of to-day, with its rubbish, its ruins, and its cottages, but Brisach covered with noble buildings piled up to the clouds. In each embrasure of its wide battlements stood a man-at-arms, his

eyes turned towards the dim blue plain ; and along the whole length of the winding road, down to the shore of the Rhine, was a file of shining pikes, halberds, and partisans reflecting the sunlight like mirrors. Horses stamped, far down the steep road, in dark gateways. Huge sounds rose from the plain. Suddenly transported to the top of a tower, I saw, far off, very far off, advancing on the stream, a long boat covered with a black pall having a great white cross in the middle. Every stroke of the funeral bell resounded from one tower to another, and passed in prolonged echoes into the depths of the ramparts. I became conscious that a great personage, an emperor or prince, was dead ; and, as everybody knelt down, I tried to kneel also, but suddenly all disappeared. I had, no doubt, attempted to turn in my bed. A death-like silence succeeded to the tumult.

“After that I saw myself again in the vault, looking out of a loophole. In front was the drawbridge, Rudolph’s Tower, and on the bridge a sentinel. ‘You have not been deceived, Nicklausse,’ said I to myself. ‘Here, beyond question, is the tower of Gontran the Miser, and the old duke lies there!’ Turning round, I saw the coffin and the old duke. It was not a skeleton, but a corpse dressed in a blue mantle sprinkled with stars and two-headed eagles embroidered in silver. I moved near. I looked at the ornaments with ecstasy. The mantle, the sword, the coronet, and the great chalice glittered in the light of a star that twinkled in the embrasure of the loophole. While I was dreaming of the happiness of possessing these riches the old duke slowly opened his eyes, and looked gravely at me.

“‘It is you, is it, Nicklausse?’ he said, without a muscle of his long visage moving. ‘I have been for-

gotten for a long time in this vault. You are welcome. Take a seat on the edge of my coffin. It is heavy, and will not tumble down.'

"He held out his hand to me, and I could not refuse to take it.

" 'God of heaven! how cold dead men's hands are!' said I to myself, shuddering.

"At that moment I woke, and found myself grasping the candlestick on the table by my bedside, the coldness of which had awakened me. The little panes of glass in my windows were white with frost.

"All the rest of the night I did nothing but try to remember my dream. Only the principal circumstances of it remained impressed on my mind; but I soon recovered it entire, real objects serving to recall every detail.

"I had to keep myself patient all that day until evening. On my way down to the landing-place with my truck, at six o'clock, I called at old Zulpick's, and told him that I should be back between eight and nine o'clock, and that then we would have a talk together. He answered me by a nod of the head, and pointed to the entrance to his vault.

"At nine o'clock the passage boat passed. Towards ten o'clock I was on my way back. As soon as I had put up my truck in the shed, I went to Gontran's Tower. Zulpick was waiting for me. We descended in silence, and from that instant I was convinced that the moment of our great discovery was near, for the stairs down which I was going I remembered as those I had passed down in my dream; but I said nothing about it to Zulpick. On reaching the bottom of the vault all my doubts, if I had still had any, must have

ceased. I recognised the place—the low-arched roof, the old walls, the deal table resting against the loop-hole, the four round panes of cracked glass, the stump-bed, the bales of rope in one corner ; I knew everything in Daddy Zulpick's burrow, and already had noted with my eye the flagstone that would have to be raised if we came to an understanding.

“A tin lamp shone on the table ; the old ropemaker, without ceremony, sat himself down on a rickety rush-bottomed chair, the only one in the place, and pointed to a chest, on which I seated myself. Zulpick, with his bald head, two tufts of hair alone remaining just above his ears, his flat nose, glittering eyes, and pointed chin, looked restless and absorbed ; he gazed at me with sombre eyes, and the first words he addressed to me were—

“‘The treasure is mine, and I don't intend to be robbed of it. It is mine ; I have won it. I am not a man to allow himself to be despoiled. Do you understand me ?’

“‘Very good, then,’ I replied, rising ; ‘since it is yours, keep it.’

“I made a movement as if to leave the place.

“Springing from his chair, he seized me by the arm, and grinding his teeth while he spoke, cried—

“‘How much do you want ?’

“‘Half.’

“‘Half !’ cried he, ‘it's abominable !—a robbery.’

“‘Keep it all, then.’

“I mounted one of the stairs.

“Almost tearing off the tail of my smock-frock, he roared—

“‘You know nothing—nothing ; you are trying to

suck me—to get over me! I shall find it by myself!

“ ‘Why do you detain me, then?’

“ ‘Come, come, sit down,’ said he, with a strange chuckle. ‘Let us see, since you know—what does the treasure consist of?’

“ ‘I reseat myself.

“ ‘In the first place, there’s the golden coronet with six branches, four large diamonds in each branch, surmounted by the cross.’

“ ‘Yes, there is that.’

“ ‘Then there is the large gold-hilted sword.’

“ ‘True.’

“ ‘The gold cup, with white, red, and yellow pearls.’

“ ‘Yes, yes, there is all that! I remember my cup, my sword, my coronet. They were left with me—I willed it so; but I want to see them again.’

“ ‘Oh if you want to keep them all,’ said I to myself, furious at such selfishness, ‘if you want to keep them all to yourself, I shall take myself off.’

“ ‘And once more I was on my way out of the place—but again he seized me by the arm, crying—

“ ‘We may yet come to terms. There’s gold besides, isn’t there?’

“ ‘Yes, the coffin is full of gold pieces.’

“ ‘At these words he became perfectly green, and exclaimed—

“ ‘I keep the gold; you shall have the silver!’

“ ‘But there is no silver!’ I cried; ‘and besides, if there were, I wouldn’t have it. Do you hear?’

“ ‘The old madman, in a fierce tone, supplicated and endeavoured to soften me; but it was easy to see that he would have tried to strangle me if he had felt

strong enough to do so, and had not stood in need of me.

“‘Come,’ said he, ‘listen to me, Nicklausse—you are a good fellow; you do not want to rob me. I tell you the treasure belongs to me. For fifty years have I been searching for it. I remember having gained it, long, long ago. Only I cannot enjoy the sight of it. But what does that matter, since it is mine?’

“‘Well, if it is yours, leave me in peace.’

“‘You are going to dig it up!’ he roared, springing towards a hatchet.

“Fortunately, I had in my hand my stout iron-pointed stick, having foreseen that things might take an unpleasant turn. I put myself on my guard therefore, and said to him coolly—

“‘Daddy Zulpick, I came to you as a friend; you wish to murder me. But have a care, for at the least offensive movement you make I shall split your skull.’

“He understood me, and, after watching my movements for a moment, and debating within himself as to whether he were the stronger, he put down the hatchet, and said to me in a low tone—

“‘You want half?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Which half? The gold, the sword, the coronet? Which—which? Say!’

“‘We’ll divide the whole into two equal parts, and draw by lot.’

“He reflected for a moment, and then said—

“‘I agree—I *must* agree; but you are robbing me; I leave that on your soul. May the devil strangle you! I can do nothing but accept’

“‘Is it agreed, then?’

“‘Haven’t I said I accept?’

“‘Yes; but you must swear on this cross.’

“‘I then drew forth my little bronze cross. On seeing it his eyes appeared to be dazzled.

“‘Where did you get that?’

“‘What’s that to you? Swear!’

“‘Well, I swear—to leave you half.’

“‘Equal division by lot?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Very well,’ said I, putting back my cross. ‘Now we may arrange matters. In the first place, Daddy Zulpick, it is here.’

“‘Here! Where?’ he cried, stammering.

“‘We must raise this flagstone, and then dig below it. We shall come upon a flight of stairs, and go down fifty steps. At the bottom there is a vault, and in that vault the treasure.’

“‘His eyes dilated as he listened to me.

“‘How do you know all that?’ he cried.

“‘I know it.’

“‘Are you sure of it?’

“‘I am sure. You shall see.’

“‘I went and fetched my pickaxe from the end of the cellar. He bounded towards me, crying—

“‘Let me raise the stone! Let me dig out the earth!’

“‘Raise the stone and dig out the earth yourself, if you like, Daddy Zulpick; but remember your oath on the cross. You may break your oath once—twice would be too much.’

“‘He said nothing, but took the pickaxe and raised the stone.

“‘I stood erect near him, with my heavy iron-pointed stick, suspicious of what his madness might lead him

to do. Several times I remarked that he cast a rapid glance at me, to see whether I was on my guard. The stone raised, he set to digging with the rapidity of a dog scratching the ground. The perspiration rolled down his back. Once he stopped and said to me—

“‘This vault is mine. I’ll go no further. You must take yourself off.’

“‘Remember your oath on the cross,’ I replied coolly.

“He continued his work, repeating at every stroke of the pickaxe, ‘You are robbing me, you are robbing me; you are a thief—all belongs to me,’ until he had reached the vaulted roof of the stairs. On discovering the first stone, he suddenly became as white as a sheet, and sat down on the heap of earth. But on my attempting to take the pickaxe, he sprang up, stammering—

“‘Let it alone!—I—I’ll do it myself—I’ll go down first!’

“‘Very well; go on.’

“He went on with the work with a vehemence that left him no time to breathe. Fury was marked in his face. The work advanced, however; every stroke of the pickaxe now returned a hollow sound; suddenly a stone fell, and then the rest of the arch sank into the opening with a dull rush. The old ropemaker was in danger of being drawn down with the falling rubbish. Fortunately I seized him and held him back; but far from thanking me, scarcely had he seen the stairs than, with frightful exasperation, he roared—

“‘All belongs to me!’

“‘And to me,’ I said drily.

“I had taken up the lamp; he demanded it.

“‘Very good; I’d rather have it so. Go on first, Daddy Zulpick.’”

VIII.

“WE descended the stairs.

“The wavering light of the lamp fell on those vaults, ten centuries old! The stealthy sound of our steps on the sonorous stairs produced a strange effect on me. My heart thumped against my ribs as if it would have broken its way through. I saw before me the bald head, blue-grey neck, and bent back of the old ropemaker. Another in my place might have been tempted by the evil one; but, thanks to Heaven, an ill thought never came into my mind, Monsieur Furbach. I must tell you that, because death followed us, watching one of us in the shade. Happy are those who have nothing to reproach themselves with, and who leave to the Lord the care of removing His creatures from this lower world! He has no need of us for this terrible labour.

“Arrived at the end of the flight of stairs, Zulpick, seeing nothing in the vault, looked at me with haggard eyes; he tried to speak, but no sound came to his lips. I showed him the ring, let into the middle flagstone; he understood me, and placing the lamp on the ground, seized the ring with both hands, and uttered a wild roar. The perspiration rolled slowly down our temples; however, I remained master of myself. Seeing the uselessness of the old man’s efforts—

“‘Let me do it, Zulpick,’ said I to him; ‘you are not strong enough.’

“He tried to answer; at that moment I observed that his lips had become blue.

“‘Sit down and take breath. I’ll not steal your share; be easy on that score.’

"But he would not sit down, and squatted by the flagstone. And while I raised it by inserting the point of my pickaxe in the interstices of the stone, he tried to keep it in its place by tearing at it with his nails.

"‘Take care!’ I cried, ‘you’ll get your hands crushed.’

"Lost trouble! He did not hear; the fury of gold possessed him, and the moment the stone was raised, and while all my strength was employed in forcing it back, he slipped below, and I heard him uttering inhuman cries, mingled with strange gaspings.

"The stone raised, I remained for several seconds as if dazzled; the glittering of jewels under the rays of the lamp made me giddy. At that moment, with the rapidity of light, all my effaced recollections returned to me. I remembered even what you had said to me at Munich—‘But if you had no light, how could you see the coffin, the knight, and the pieces of gold? Your dream, you see, hasn’t common sense.’ And for an answer to this objection, my eyes sought for some kind of light. It was then that I saw an opening in the wall. On the outside, this resembled one of those massive air-holes found in all ramparts, intended to carry off the humidity of the ground. The pale moon shone in through this aperture, and mingled its blue rays with the yellow rays of our lamp.

"This proves to you, my dear Monsieur Furbach, that at such moments our senses acquire an almost superhuman acuteness; nothing escapes them, not even the most trivial circumstances.

"Zulpick had seized the coronet from its mouldy purple cushion and placed it on his head with a haughty

air. In the same manner he took the sword, then the chalice, and looking at me—

“‘Here is the duke,’ he said solemnly, ‘the old duke, Gontran the Miser!’

“And as I lifted a corner of the drapery, now stiff as cardboard, and the gold became visible, the old madman, raising the sword, tried to fell me by a blow on the head; but an indescribable gurgle escaped from his chest, and he sank down, uttering a long-drawn sigh!

“Seized with horror, I held the lamp to his face, and saw that his left temple was blue-black, his eyes turned in their orbits, and that a bloody froth was oozing from his lips.

“‘Daddy Zulpick!’ I cried.

“He did not answer.

“I soon became aware that he had been struck dead by apoplexy! Was it the sight of the gold? Was it for having broken his oath, in refusing me my share of the spoils? Was it because his hour had come, as ours will come? I knew not, and I did not trouble myself about it: fear of being surprised under such circumstances in presence of the body froze my blood. I should certainly have been accused of murdering Zulpick, that poor weak old man, for the purpose of carrying off his property. What was I to do?—make my escape and leave him there? That was my first idea; but while I was ascending the stairs, the distress of losing all those riches I had so long coveted made me go down again. I forced from Zulpick’s hands the sword and the cup, which he held clutched in his stiffened fingers, and replaced them, with the coronet, on the coffin. Then taking Zulpick’s body on my shoulder and the lamp off the ground, I

went up to the vault above. There I extended the old ropemaker on his stump-bed, and, after putting back the earth and rubbish, lowered the flagstone into its place. That done, I carefully opened the door of the vault and looked anxiously out. Everybody near was sleeping. It was not yet two o'clock in the morning, the moon spread the broad black shadows of Saint Etienne over the hardened snow. I escaped towards the Schlossgarten, and slipped into my bedroom through the park-entrance.

"Next day all Brisach learned that Zulpick had died of a stroke of apoplexy. He was buried on the following day, the old gossips of the village, the sailors, and the raftsmen, in procession, conducting him to the cemetery.

"For three weeks I continued to drag my truck. At the end of that time the sale, by public auction, of the vault, the stump-bed, and the chair of Zulpick took place; and as I still had by me the 200 florins I had earned in your service, I became the purchaser of all these effects for the sum of three goulden, which did not fail to astonish the neighbourhood, Monsieur Durlach included. How could a simple domestic have become possessed of three goulden? I showed to Monsieur Durlach the memorandum you had given me, and there were no more objections on that score. Very soon, indeed, a report was spread that I was a rich man, who dragged a truck as a penance. Others said that I had disguised myself as a servant for the purpose of buying the ruins of Old Brisach at a low price, and selling them again in one lot to the Emperor of Austria, who proposed to rebuild the castles of the Hapsburgs from bottom to top, in the style of the twelfth century, bringing back the old ritters, chaplains, and bishops.

Some, more practical, inclined to believe that I simply wanted to establish at Brisach a straw-hat manufactory, such as there were in Alsatia.

“From the time of my acquisition, Mademoiselle Fridoline was no longer the same to me; she did not know what to think of all the reports that were circulated concerning me, and appeared more timid and more reserved than hitherto. I saw her blush at my approach, and when I announced my intention of returning to my own country she became very sad. It even appeared to me the next day that she had been crying, a circumstance pleasant to me; for I had resolved to accomplish my dream entirely, and what remained of it to be done was not the least agreeable part.

“What more is there for me to tell you, Monsieur Furbach? The rest of my story is easily to be guessed. Shut up in my burrow at night, the door well secured, I again went down into the lower vault, and when I saw myself in full possession of the treasure, when I calculated these immense riches, and said to myself that for the future want could never reach me, how can I express to you the feeling of gratitude that took possession of my soul?

“And later, when I had effected at Frankfort the exchange of some hundreds of my gold pieces with Kummer, the banker, who was astonished at the antiquity of the coins, which dated from the time of the Crusades; and when I returned to Old Brisach, like a great personage, on board the dampschiff Hermann for the arrival of which I had so many times waited in the snow, how shall I describe to you the astonishment and delight of Fridoline, as, blushing and agitated, she saw me take my seat at the travellers’ table; the

affectionate congratulations of Daddy Durlach, and the confusion of Katel, who had been used to treat me with a high hand sometimes, calling me a sluggard, when I appeared to her too melancholy and sighed by the corner of the hearth. Poor Katel! she had done it with the best intentions in the world, shaking me up a little to raise my courage; but now she appeared confused, speechless, and stupefied at having ill-treated the great personage she saw gravely installed at table, in his dragon-green witchoura, lined with sable.

“Ah! Monsieur Furbach, what singular contrasts there are in the world, and how wrong the old proverb is which says ‘the frock does not make the monk!’ It is useless to abuse money, seeing what a position it gives a man. I shall never forget that the moment I opened my trunk, and took out my cash-box and opened it on the table, good old Durlach, very prudent by nature, and who, until then, had somewhat doubted the solidity of my opulence, suddenly seeing the gold glitter, very respectfully took off his black silk cap, and said pettishly to Fridoline—

“‘Come, Fridoline, bring the armchair for Monsieur Nicklausse: you think of nothing!’

“And when I told him that the dearest of my wishes was to obtain his granddaughter in marriage, he, who a few weeks before would have been indignant at such a proposition, and would very quickly have shown me the door, now appeared to be completely overcome by it.

“‘Certainly, certainly, my dear Monsieur Nicklausse! You do us a great honour!’

“He made one condition, however, that I should remain at the Schlossgarten; ‘not wishing,’ he said,

'that an establishment founded by his grandfather should pass into the hands of strangers.'

"Fridoline, seated in a corner, wept silently.

"And when kneeling down before her I asked—

"'Fridoline, do you love me? Fridoline, will you be my wife?'

"The poor child was hardly able to reply—

"'You know well, Nicklausse, that I love you!'

"Ah, Monsieur Furbach, such recollections compel us to bless this despicable gold, by whose means alone such happiness is possible!"

Nicklausse paused, and for some time remained meditative, his elbow on the table, his forehead resting on his hand. He appeared to see all the happy and unhappy days of the past defile before his mind's eye; he was moved to tears. The old bookseller's head was bowed, and he too sat lost in reveries that were not at all habitual with him.

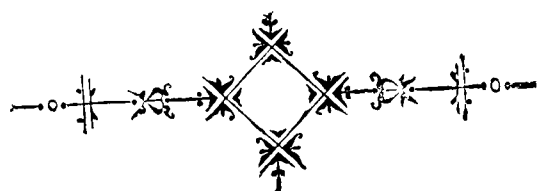
"My dear friend," he said suddenly, rising as he spoke, "your story is wonderful; but after reflecting on it, I own I can't make it out. Can it have been an effect of magnetism, the little cross you showed me at Munich having belonged to Gontran the Miser? Who knows? In any case, I know I shall have frightful dreams to-night."

Nicklausse made no reply: he had risen from his seat and lighted his old master to his room in silence.

The moon shone on the high windows of the room; it was nearly one o'clock.

The next day Monsieur Furbach went away to Bâle on the dampfschiff. He waved his hand from the deck in sign of farewell, and Nicklausse answered him with a wave of his hat.

MY ILLUSTRIOUS FRIEND SELSAM.





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I.



HE evening of the 19th of September, 1855, I went to pay a visit to my old university comrade, the illustrious Doctor Selsam, professor of general pathology, lecturer on clinical surgery, accoucheur to the grand duchess, &c., &c.

I found him alone in his fine drawing-room in the Bergstrasse, with his elbow resting on a small black marble table, and his eyes fixed on a crystal globe, containing, as far as I could discern, nothing but very clear spring water.

In spite of the purple rays of sunset which invaded the room through three lofty windows which once looked into the palace gardens, my friend Selsam's lean physiognomy, the razor-like sharpness of his nose, and his long pointed chin borrowed a frightfully wan hue from the reflection of the glass globe; he looked like a freshly-severed head, and the red collar of his dress-

ing-gown heightened the illusion. The whole effect struck me so forcibly that I did not dare to interrupt his reflections. In fact, I was on the point of retiring without disturbing him, had not the fat porter, whom I had passed snoring in the ante-room, happened to rouse himself, and call out, in his most imposing tones—

“M. the Councillor Theodore Kilian !”

Selsam sighed, turned his head mechanically towards me, held out his hand, and said—

“Salve tibi, Theodore! Quomodo vales?”

“Optime, Adrien,” replied I.

Then raising my voice, I continued—

“My friend, what are you doing there? Are you thinking over Sangrado’s doctrine by yourself?”

His face suddenly assumed such an ambiguous expression that I was quite astonished at it.

“Theodore,” he began, after a moment’s silence, “this is no subject for joking. I am studying the complaint of your respected aunt, Dame Anna Wunderlich. What you related to me yesterday respecting it is very serious; this extravagance of ideas, these transports of rapture, these starts, and, more than all, the exaggeration of expressions employed by the sensible old lady when speaking of Haydn’s *Creation*, Handel’s oratorios, and Beethoven’s symphonies all presage a dangerous attack of illness.”

“And you believe you have found a remedy for it in that bottle of water?”

“Precisely. Chance has brought you hither at a most opportune moment; I was just thinking of you.”

Then, pointing to a violin hanging against the wall, he continued—

“Oblige me by playing an air of Mozart’s.”

This request seemed to me so absurd that the idea involuntarily suggested itself to me that Selsam's brain was as crazy as my aunt's ; but he guessed what I was thinking of, and observed, with an ironical smile—

“Don't be afraid, my dear Theodore, don't be afraid ; my intellectual faculties are quite sound yet ; but I am on the brink of a great and sublime discovery.”

“Good ! then I am at your service.”

I took down the violin and looked at it with envious eyes. It was one of those famous Lévenhaupts of which Frederick II. caused a dozen to be made to accompany his flute performances, the most perfect instruments possible, faultless indeed, and by many good judges considered quite equal to those by Stradivarius.

Be that as it may, I had hardly allowed the bow to touch the strings when all that had been said to me in its favour fell short of the reality ; the extreme purity of its tones, added to the elegance of the composition, made me feel raised to the seventh heaven.

“Oh, great, great master,” cried I, “most sublime of melodists ! who could remain insensible to such grace, vigour, and inspiration ?”

My wig fell on the floor, my eyes twinkled, my knees shook ; I was no longer master of myself ; Selsam, the glass globe, and my aunt's illness had all passed out of my mind entirely.

At last in an hour's time I woke up from a dream, and found myself lying on Dr. Adrien's sofa, and trying to account for what had happened.

I saw Selsam with a large magnifying-glass in his hand seated opposite the globe. The water it contained had become thick, and it was full of infusoria.

"Well, Selsam," said I in a weak voice, "are you satisfied?"

He came to my side with a look of delight on his face, and taking both my hands in his own, said, with an expression of very great satisfaction on his face—

"Thanks, my dear and worthy comrade, a thousand thanks. You have just rendered science the greatest possible service."

I was dumbfounded.

"What! when I played that air from Mozart was I rendering a service to science?"

"Yes, my dear friend Theodore; I cannot leave you in ignorance of the share you have had in solving the great problem. Come, follow me; you see everything and understand everything."

He lighted a lamp, for it had become dark, then he opened a side door and made me a sign to follow him. I felt myself a prey to an emotion for which I could not account; as we passed through several rooms I fancied some great change was about to take place in my existence; perhaps I was about to receive the key to the invisible world.

The lamp threw a bright light on the gaudy furniture of the doctor's luxurious abode; ornaments, pictures, and rich carpets disappeared one after the other into darkness, and the light as it glided from one gilded picture to another at last brought us to a staircase with bronze balusters.

We descended into an inner court; the stealthy tone of our footsteps seemed at a distance like mysterious whisperings.

When in the courtyard I noticed the night was quiet: numberless stars were shining in the sky; there

were several doors before us. Selsam stopped at one and said, turning to me—

“This is my lecture-hall, and here I dissect. Do not flurry yourself; Nature will only leave her secrets with the dead.”

I was afraid, and I should have retreated had it been possible, but Adrien had entered the amphitheatre without waiting my reply, and I felt obliged to follow him.

So I went in, feeling very uneasy; and there on a long oaken table lay a body—the body of a young man; his hands close to his sides, head thrown back, eyes staring open, motionless as a clod of earth; he had a fine forehead; on the left side there was a wide wound, exposing the cavity of the cheek; but it was the motionless silence which affected me more than the character of the head and the sight of the wound.

Such is man, thought I; inertness, eternal rest!

This overpowering idea was weighing me down, when Selsam, laying his scalpel's edge on the subject before him, said—

“This is all life; this will all be born again! thousands of existences, enslaved by the same governing power, are about to regain their independence. The only part of this corpse which has ceased to exist is the power of commanding, and the authority which imposed one sole direction to all these individual lives! Well! that power was there.”

He struck the head, which returned a dull sound, as if he had touched a piece of wood.

I was shaking; nevertheless, Selsam's words reassured me somewhat.

“It is not absolute annihilation, then?” said I; “so

much the better! I would rather live in detail than not live at all."

"Yes!" observed Selsam, who seemed to read my thoughts on my face as fast as my mind conceived them; "yes, man in detail is immortal; every one of the atoms which compose him are immortal and imperishable; they all live, suffer, think; but their life, their sufferings, their thoughts are transmitted to the soul which rules them, provides for their wants, and imposes its will upon them! Men have sought for a type of the most perfect form of government, and pretended to have discovered it in a hive of bees, or a nest of ants; this ideal model of a government, here it is!"

With these words he plunged his scalpel into the subject, and opened it completely. I started back horrorstruck, but he took no notice of me, and calmly continued—

"Now let us first observe the means of the soul's action and transmission. You see there thousands of white threads, which extend and spread all through the body: they are the nerves, the high roads of this great country, whence come and go messengers quicker than the lightning, carrying the orders of the central atoms to the extremities, or warning it of the dangers and wants which affect its innumerable subjects. Thus everything proceeds, moves, and directs itself to the aim assigned to it by the soul. Still, every atom has its own peculiar task; for instance, see here, Theodore, are the organs of respiration; here those of the circulation of the blood, the heart, veins, and arteries; here are the digestive organs, the stomach, and the intestines. Now you must not believe for a moment that they are

all composed of the same elements, the same beings; no! when decomposition sets in the lungs produce one species of insects, the intestines another, and the heart again a totally different species; and so on with every organ.

“Man when living is an entire universe subjected to one will; and you must know that again every one of these infinitesimal atoms possesses a soul in itself. The Supreme Being has granted no privileged immortality, for all and everything, from the very smallest atom to the immeasurable whole occupying space, are subjected to the same invariable justice; nothing is absent from the place which its merit has assigned it, which alone explains the admirable order which regulates the world, so that man, a fragment of humanity, is compelled to obey God just as the atom acts according to the will of the living man. Just form an idea, Theodore, of the infinite power of that great Being whose will acts upon us as our soul acts on our flesh and blood. All nature is the flesh and blood of God; through it He suffers, thinks, and acts; each of its atoms is imperishable, for God cannot perish in one of His atoms.”

“Where, then, is my liberty of action?” I exclaimed; “if I am but an enslaved atom, how can I be responsible for my actions?”

‘Liberty is not affected,’ said Selsam, “for the atom of my flesh may revolt against my entire being, as is frequently the case; but then it perishes and my organisation removes it. It has been free, and it but undergoes the consequences of its own actions. So am I free to act; I can rise in revolt against God’s laws; I may abuse the power I possess over the beings of which

I am composed, and thus induce my own dissolution. The atoms then become independent and my soul loses its power. Is it not sufficient to prove that we suffer the consequences of our own faults to show that we are responsible and consequently free?"

To all this I was without a reply ready, and we stood there staring at one another.

"All this, my dear Selsam," said I at last, "may be very logical, and your theories may be superb; but I do not see the connection between them and your water-bottle, and what my aunt's complaints have to do with the air from Mozart."

"Nothing is plainer," replied he, smiling. "You are, of course, aware that the vibration of sound can impart a rapid motion to grains of sand spread over a drum-head, and cause it to describe geometrical figures of very marvellous regularity——"

"Of course, but——"

"But," said he impatiently, "let me finish my explanation. In the same way as sounds act upon fluid atoms, whence infinite combinations result, with this difference, that these atoms being in motion, the forms which result from them are animated creatures; this is what naturalists call equivocal creation. Now, sound acting on the nervous system produces a disengagement of electricity which acts in its turn on the liquids contained in our bodies, when thousands and thousands of insects are produced which attack our organs and cause several diseases, such as deafness, epilepsy, singing in the ears, dimness of sight, catalepsy, idiotcy, nightmare, convulsions, St. Vitus's dance, spasms, and many other complaints to which women who are fond of music are particularly subject, and the nature of which has re-

mained unknown to this day. All these insects spread themselves through the tissues of our bodies as if they were so many wormeaten pieces of furniture; they soon take entire possession of us and dismantle us entirely. It is the history of the Roman people, enervated by Asiatic luxury. The barbarians made short work of them when they attacked them."

This description of Selsam's made my hair stand on end.

"And do you believe," I asked, "that music is the cause of this disastrous state of things?"

"Indubitably it is. Only look at the old organ-players in the streets, or those who practise much on the harp and the piano in our homes, to be convinced of it; the health of your unfortunate aunt is threatened most seriously; I only know one way to prevent the entire loss of her reason, if not of her life."

"What way, Selsam? Although I am her heir presumptive, it is a question of conscience with me to do my best to save her."

"Yes," he replied, "I know your delicacy of feeling; it is affection, and not interest, which makes you speak as you do. But it is late, Theodore; I heard the clock strike twelve but now; return here to-morrow evening at ten, and I shall have by that time prepared the only remedy which can save your aunt Anna. I wish you to owe her restoration to health entirely to me. The cure will be a radical one—I give you my word as professor it shall be so."

"I am sure it will. But could you not just tell me——"

"What would be the use of telling you now? To-morrow you shall know all. I must sleep now."

He crossed the court; he opened the door into the Bergstrasse for me; we shook hands as we wished each other good night, and I regained my chamber, but with reflections of no very agreeable nature.

II.

ALL that night I was unable to close my eyes; I passed the time I ought to have devoted to sleep in trying to conjecture how Selsam would drive the formidable array of parasites which he had described in the last chapter from the body of my respected aunt Wunderlich.

This idea haunted me the whole of the next day until the evening. I went in and out, and talked out loud to myself so that people turned round to look at me as I passed by, so great was my preoccupation.

As I passed the shop of Quornam the chemist I stopped for more than an hour to read the numerous labels on the phials and large bottles in his window. Asafetida, arsenic, chloraline, potassium, friar's balsam, the capuchin's remedy, Mademoiselle Stéfen's remedy, De Fioraventi's, &c., &c.

"Good heavens!" said I to myself, "one must be lucky indeed to hit upon the exact remedy to cure one without destroying the central atom! It must require some courage to dose one's self with asafetida or the capuchin's or Fioraventi's remedy, when sometimes merely a bit of bread or a morsel of meat suffices to give one a fit of indigestion."

That same evening while sitting at supper with my good aunt I looked at her with compassion.

Alas ! poor Anna Wunderlich, thought I, if you knew that thousands of ferocious though microscopically small insects are working your destruction while you sit there quietly drinking tea !

“ Why do you look at me in that way, Theodore ? ” she asked uneasily.

“ Oh, nothing, aunt, nothing. ”

“ Yes, it is something. I see you think I am looking ill this evening. Is it not so ? ”

“ Well, you are looking pale. I would make a bet you have had some fresh music lately. ”

“ So I have ; yesterday the music of the opera of the *Grand Darius* was sent me—a most sublime composition, quite a——”

“ I was sure of it ; and you have passed the evening in practising on the piano, throwing yourself into attitudes, in being enraptured, and in gasping out—‘ Ah ! ah ! divine ! perfect ! marvellous ! ’ every moment. ”

She became purple.

“ What is the meaning of all this ? Do you mean to say, sir, that I have not the right to——”

“ I never said anything of the sort, but you are ruining your nervous system in doing so—you——”

“ My nervous system ! You must be going mad ; you don’t know what you say. ”

“ In Heaven’s name calm yourself, aunt ; anger disengages electricity, which in its turn produces thousands of insects. ”

“ Insects ! ” cried she, jumping up from her chair. “ Insects ! Have you ever seen any insects about me, you wretch ! What ! you dare to come here—it is infamous ! Insects ! Louise ! Katel ! Leave the room, sir ! ”

“ But, aunt——”

“ Leave the room this moment ! I disinherit you this instant !”

She screamed and cried, her cap fell over one side of her face—she looked horrible.

“ Look here, aunt,” said I, as I rose to go away, “ don’t be angry ; I did not mean the insects you fancy I did ; I speak of thysanomes and coleopteres and lepidopteres, and those myriads of little monsters which have effected a lodgment in your body and are daily devouring you !”

At these words Aunt Wunderlich fell back in her arm-chair, her arms hanging down, and her face so pale that the rouge which she habitually applied to her cheeks looked like large spots of blood.

I made but one bound from our house to Selsam’s apartments. When I entered his room I was, as I heard afterwards, as pale as death.

“ My friend, she has an attack——”

Then I stopped, struck with amazement. There was a number of persons present ; in the first place the conservator of the archæological museum, Daniel Bremer, with his powdered wig and maroon-coloured coat, his fat face and projecting eyes like a frog’s ; he was holding a sort of gigantic bagpipe to his mouth, and seemed to be explaining how to play it. Then the chapel-master, Christian Hoffer, buried in an arm-chair, with his long legs hidden away under the table ; he was engaged in playing the keys of another strange-looking instrument like a long tube with his bony fingers, and never raised his eyes to look at me as I opened the door, so absorbed was he in examining the instrument he held.

Then there were Kaspar Marback, prosecutor at Saint Catherine's Hospital, and Rebstock, dean of the faculty of belles-lettres, both in black coats and white cravats, the one armed with an immense bronze plate, and the other begirt with a drum made of some foreign wood covered with goatskin.

These serious-looking persons were seated round the lamp, their cheeks puffed out, and their attentive demeanour seemed to me so grotesque that I stood nailed where I was with outstretched neck and open mouth, as if I was in a dream.

Selsam gravely offered me a chair, and the conservator of the museum continued his explanations.

"This, gentlemen, is the famous *busca-tibia* of the Swiss; it is capable of emitting most terrible sounds which are audible above the torrent's roar; if the Councillor Theodore will have the goodness to take it, I am convinced he will produce some very great effects from it."

He put the horn into my hands with an air of great solemnity, and then addressing himself to the prosecutor, Kaspar Marback—

"Your drum, sir, is the finest of the sort we have ever seen; it is the *karabo* of the Egyptians and the Assyrians; the jugglers of the East make use of it for their snakes and bayaderes to dance to."

"Thus?" asked the prosecutor, striking the drum alternately with either hand.

"Right, quite right—very well. Now for the dean. He has only to strike his bronze plate every second; it is the famous *tam-tam*, and its dismal tones resemble the knell of our cathedral's great bell. It will produce a marvellous effect, especially in the

silence of night. Do you all understand your parts, gentlemen?"

"Quite well."

"Then we may as well set out."

"One moment," said the doctor. "I ought to make Theodore understand what decision we have come to."

Then addressing himself to me—

"My dear friend, your respected aunt's situation requires a very strong remedy. After many hours' reflection a brilliant idea has occurred to me. What is her complaint? It is a nausea of the nervous system, it is a debility arising from the abuse of music. Well, under such circumstances what is to be done, what course of treatment pursued? The most rational one is that of Hippocrates, founded on the dogma, *contraria contrariis curantur*, and that of our immortal Hahnemann, *similia similibus curantur*. What is there more opposed to the tame and insipid music of our sentimental operas than the wild and savage music of the Hebrews, the Caribs, and the Abyssinians? Nothing. I borrow, then, their instruments, and I execute some Hottentot airs in the presence of your respected aunt, and the principle, *contraria contrariis*, is followed out by my treatment. Again, what resembles music more than music itself? Clearly nothing. Hahnemann's principle, *similia similibus*, is equally respected, and at the same time——"

This seemed to me a most sublime idea.

"Selsam," I exclaimed, "you are indeed a genius. Hippocrates has summed up the thesis of medicine and Hahnemann the antithesis, but you have just created the synthesis, and a great discovery it is——"

"I know it, I know it," said he, "but allow me to

conclude. I consequently had recourse to the conservator of the museum of voyages and travels, who not only consented to lend us the tam-tam, the buscatibia, and the karabo from his collection, but willingly proffered us his assistance to play the fife, which will complete our improvised concert in the most harmonious manner."

I made the conservator a very low bow expressive of my gratitude. He seemed touched by it, and said to me—

"Believe me, Councillor Kilian, I am most happy to be able to render you the smallest service, or your respected aunt Dame Anna Wunderlich, whose many virtues are clouded momentarily by this unhappy exaggeration of musical enjoyment, and the abuse of the use of stringed instruments. Let us trust that our efforts may succeed in bringing her back to the simpler tastes of our forefathers."

"Let us hope we may," I exclaimed.

"Now, gentlemen, we must go," said Selsam.

Then we all descended the grand staircase. It was just striking eleven; the night was dark; not a star to be seen; but gusts of wind made the weathercocks creak and the street lamps swing backwards and forwards. We glided along the walls like so many malefactors, each carrying his instrument concealed under his coat. When we reached my aunt's door I gently inserted the key in the door, and Selsam having lighted a wax taper, we entered the hall in silence. Then each of us took his place opposite the chamber door, and with his instrument at his lips only awaited the signal to begin.

This had all been done in such extreme quiet that not a soul had stirred in the house. Selsam even gently

pushed the door ajar, and then raising his voice called out, "Now!"

I did indeed blow my bullock's horn, and the tam-tam, the fife, and the karabo all began at the same time.

It is not possible to convey any idea of this barbarous serenade. One would have thought the roof of the house was about to fall in.

We heard one cry, but instead of leaving off a sort of frenzy took possession of us, and the big drum and the rest made such an infernal din that I could no longer hear the sounds which proceeded from the horn on which I was playing. The dismal sounds of the tam-tam inspired us with an inexpressible feeling of terror, such as one might feel at a feast of cannibals at which one would probably play the part of the roast joint. Our hair stood upright on our heads. The trumpet at the day of judgment sounding the reveillée for the dead could not have produced a more terrible effect.

Twenty times did Selsam endeavour to stop us, but we were deaf to his cries, and a sort of diabolical frenzy seemed to have possessed us.

At last fatigue and want of breath put an end to this horrible din.

Then Selsam, raising his finger, said—

"Silence! Listen!"

But our ears were for the moment completely deafened, and we could hear nothing.

After a few minutes pause the doctor, becoming uneasy, pushed the door open and advanced into the room to see the result of his remedy. We awaited his return impatiently. As he seemed a long time absent I was

about to follow him, when he came out, looking very pale, and looked very strangely at us all.

"Gentlemen," said he, "let us go."

"But, Selsam, what was the result of your experiment?"

I was holding him by the arm ; he turned brusquely round and said—

"Well, she is dead!"

"Dead?" cried I, starting back.

"Yes, the electric disengagement was too violent ; it has destroyed all the internal parasites ; but it has, at the same time, shattered the central atom. But all the same that proves nothing against my discovery ; on the contrary, your aunt died, it is true, but cured!"

And then he walked off.

We followed, pale and frightened. As soon as we got into the street we separated, some one way, some another, without exchanging a word ; the *dénouement* had alarmed us.

The next day the whole town learned that Dame Anna Wunderlich had died suddenly. Some of her neighbours asserted that they had heard very strange noises the preceding night, but as there had been a great storm about the same time, the police made no inquiries about it. Besides, the doctor, who had been called in, declared that my aunt had died from an attack of apoplexy while playing the final duet in the *Grand Darius*, for she was found dead, seated in her armchair before the piano, with the opera open before her !

So everything went off well, and we were not troubled in any way. About six months after this occurrence Doctor Selsam published a work on the treatment of helminths, or internal parasites, by the aid of music—a

work which had very great success. Prince Hatto von Schlittenhof sent him the grand cross of the Black Vulture, and her highness the reigning duchess condescended to congratulate him in person. It is even now a question whether he shall not be named president of the Scientific Society in the place of old Mathias Kobus; in fact, he is a very lucky man. As for myself, I shall reproach myself all my life for having contributed to the death of my dear aunt Anna Wunderlich by blowing that abominable busca-tibia for a quarter of an hour. True it is I had no idea of harming her, but, on the contrary, I hoped by so doing to enable her to get rid of her internal insects, and so lengthen her life for many years; nevertheless, dead she is, poor woman, and grieved I am on her account.

I call God to witness that the idea of destroying the central atom never once occurred to me. Indeed, I am ashamed to confess I should have laughed at any one who would have come and told me that by means of an air of music we could kill even a little fly.



THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF
FISHES.



THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES.



I.

ONE morning, in the month of September, 1850, old Andreusse Cappelmans, the marine painter, my worthy master, and I were quietly smoking our pipes at the window of his studio, on the upper floor of the old house which forms the right-hand corner of the Rue des Brabançons, on the bridge at Leyden, while we emptied a pot of ale to our respective healths.

I was then eighteen years of age, with a pink and white face and fair hair. Cappelmans was about fifty; his large nose was becoming rather blue, his hair was silvery at the temples, wrinkles were forming round his little grey eyes, and deeper ones traversed his brown cheeks. Instead of the cock's plume which it was once his pride to wear, he now carried but a single feather from a raven's wing in his hat.

The weather was very fine. Before us the old Rhine

flowed along, a few white clouds were floating in the blue sky, the port and its great black barges, with their sails motionless, seemed asleep at our feet, the blue waves reflected the rays of the sun, and hundreds of swallows were cleaving the air in all directions.

There we sat, musing, much disposed to sentimental reflections; the large vine-leaves which grew round our window quivered at every breath of air, a butterfly fluttered by, and a dozen chirping sparrows immediately set off in pursuit; down below, on the roof of a shed, a great tortoiseshell cat sat blinking in the sun, and waving gently its tail from side to side, in a mood as meditative as our own. It was the most tranquilising sight imaginable; nevertheless, Cappelmans seemed sad and anxious.

"Master Andreusse," said I suddenly, "you seem very much out of sorts."

"You are right," replied he. "I am as melancholy as a cudgelled donkey."

"Why? We have plenty of work, you have more orders than you can execute, and we shall have the kermesse here in a fortnight."

"I have had a bad dream."

"Master Cappelmans, do you believe in dreams?"

"I am not sure, Christian, whether it was a dream or not, for I had my eyes wide open."

Then, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on the window-sill—

"You must have heard," said he, "of my old comrade Van Marius, the famous marine painter, who understood the sea as well as Ruysdael did the land, Van Ostade a village, Rembrandt dark interior effects, and Rubens temples, palaces, and feasts. He was indeed

a great painter. When one looked at his picture, one did not say 'How well painted!' but 'How beautiful the sea looks!' or 'How grand, how terrible it is!' You could not see the brush of Van Marius at work; it seemed like the shadow of God's hand on the canvas. Oh, genius, genius, what a sublime gift that is, Christian!"

Cappelmans was silent, his lips were closed, his brows contracted, and he had tears in his eyes.

It was the first time I had ever seen him in this mood, so I was quite astonished.

In another moment he continued—

"Van Marius and I had studied together at Utrecht under old Ryssen. We were in love with two sisters; we used to pass our evenings together at the sign of the Frog, like two brothers. We afterwards came to Leyden arm-in-arm. Van Marius had but one fault; he liked geneva and schiedam better than ale and porter. You must do me the justice to admit, Christian, that I never get intoxicated with anything but ale, and for that reason I am always in good health. Unfortunately, Van Marius used to get drunk on geneva. Even then, if he had only drunk when he was at the tavern, but he used to have liquor sent to his studio; he could only work with energy when he had a couple of pints of spirits under his belt, and his eyes were coming out of his head. Then you should see him, and hear him yell, and sing, and whistle; he would roar like the sea as he worked, every touch of his brush raised a wave, at every whistle you could see the clouds getting larger, and heavier, and darker; then he would snatch up a brush with red, and lo! the lightning flowed from the sky down on the dark waves like a stream of melted

lead, while in the distance was a vessel, a cutter maybe, a dismantled wreck, amidst the darkness and the white foam of the waves. It was frightful! When Van Marius painted a calm he made the old blind man, Coppelius, play the clarionet to him for two florins a day; he mixed his geneva with ale and ate sausages to inspire his imagination with scenes of country life. You must see yourself, Christian, how destructive such a regime as that must have been to the talent of any man. How many times did I say to him, 'Take care, Jan, take care! Geneva will be the death of you some day.'

"But instead of listening to me he would begin to thunder out some drinking song, and he always ended by crowing like a cock. This was his greatest pleasure. For instance, at the tavern when his glass was empty, instead of knocking the bottom against the table to call the waiter's attention to him, he would shake his arms and begin crowing until his wants were attended to. For some time past Marius had often spoken to me about his chef-d'œuvre, the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes.' He had shown me his first sketches for it, and I was delighted with them, when one morning he suddenly disappeared from Leyden, and since then no one has heard anything of him."

Here Cappelmans thoughtfully lighted his pipe again, and continued—

"Last night I was at the Golden Jug with Doctor Römer, of Eisenlaffel, and five or six comrades. About ten, à propos to what I cannot say, Römer began declaiming against potatoes, declaring they were the scourge of the human race; that since the discovery of potatoes the aborigines of America, the Irish, the

Swedes, the Dutch, and, generally speaking, all those nations which consume great quantities of spirituous liquors, instead of taking their former position in the world, were now reduced to nothing. He attributed this decay to potato brandy, and while I was listening to him—I cannot tell by what chain of reasoning it came into my head—the memory of Van Marius presented itself to me. ‘Poor old fellow,’ thought I, ‘what is he doing now? Has he finished his great picture? Why have I never heard from him?’ While thinking over these things, Zelig, the watchman, came into the tavern to tell us it was time to go—it was striking eleven. I went straight home, my head felt rather heavy, and I went to sleep.

“About an hour afterwards, Brigitte, the stocking-mender opposite, set fire to her curtains. She screamed out, ‘Fire!’ I hear a noise of people running in the street, I open my eyes, and what do I see? A great black cock perched on the easel in the middle of the room.

“In less than half a minute the old woman’s curtains had blazed away and burnt themselves out. Every one went home again laughing—but the black cock remained there on his perch, and as the moon shone brightly between the towers of the town hall, this singular animal was perfectly visible to me; he had large yellow eyes, with a red circle round them, and scratched his comb with his claw.

“I had been watching him for at least ten minutes, trying to explain to myself how this strange creature could have found its way into my studio, when it left off scratching its comb, raised its head, and said—

“‘What, Cappelmans! you don’t recognise me? I

am, nevertheless, the soul of your old friend Van Marius !'

" 'The soul of Van Marius !' cried I. 'Is Van Marius dead, then?'

" 'Yes,' replied the cock with a melancholy air, 'it is all over, my poor friend. I wanted to have a trial of strength with Herod van Gambrinus; we drank two days and two nights without stopping. The morning of the third day, as old Judith was extinguishing the candles, I rolled under the table ! My body now rests in Osterhaffen Cemetery, facing the sea, and I am looking out for some new organism. But that is not the question now. I came to ask a service of you, Cappelmanns.'

" 'A service ? Say, what is it ? All that man can do will I do for you.'

" 'Very good,' replied the cock—'very good. I was sure you would not refuse my request. Well, this is how the matter stands. You must know, Andreusse, that I had gone to the Herring Creek on purpose to finish the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes.' Unfortunately, death surprised me before I could put the last touches to this picture. Gambrinus has hung it up as a trophy in the great room of his tavern, and that fills my soul with bitterness. I shall only be at rest when it is finished, and I come now to pray you to finish it for me. You promise me you will ; is it not so, Cappelmanns?'

" 'Rest assured, Jan, it shall be done.'

" 'Then good night.'

"Whereupon the cock flapped his wings and flew through one of the panes of glass without making the least noise."

Having concluded this extraordinary story, Cappelmans laid his pipe down in the window and finished his glass at a gulp.

We sat for some time in silence, looking at one another.

"And do you believe that this black cock was the soul of Van Marius?" said I at last to the good master.

"Do I believe it? I feel sure it was."

"Then what do you intend to do, Master Andreusse?"

"It is very clear what I have to do—I shall go to Osterhaffen. An honest man must keep his promise, and I have given mine to Van Marius to finish his picture for him, and I will finish it, cost what it may. In an hour Van Eyck, the one-eyed man, will be here with his cart for me."

Then he ceased speaking and looked earnestly at me.

"Now I think of it," said he, "you had better come with me, Christian; it is a good opportunity for you to see the Herring Creek. Besides, who knows what may happen? I should be well satisfied to have you with me."

"I should like to go very much, Master Andreusse," said I, "but you know what my aunt Catherine is as well as I can tell you; she will never let me go."

"Your aunt Catherine! I shall tell her it is indispensable for your improvement that you should see the coast. How can a man become a painter of marine subjects who has never quitted the neighbourhood of Leyden, and all he knows of the sea is the insignificant port of Kalwyk? That is all nonsense! You must come with me, Christian—that is a settled thing."

While the good man was talking he put on his loose

red jacket, and then taking me by the arm he gravely took me to my aunt.

I need not repeat to you all that was said on both sides—my aunt's objections, and how they were met by Master Cappelmans, in order to induce her to allow me to go with him. The fact is, he ended by having his own way, and two hours after we were rolling along in the cart towards Osterhaffen.

II.

OUR cart, drawn by a Zuyder-zee pony, with a big head, short and hairy legs, and his back covered with an old dogskin rug, had been rolling along for three hours between Leyden and Herring Creek, without appearing to be any nearer the end of our journey.

The setting sun shed its long purple rays across the marshy plain; the ditches were flaming red, and all around the reeds, rushes, and shave-grass which grew on their banks threw their black shadows across the dyke.

It soon grew dark, and Cappelmans, rousing himself from his meditations, called out—

“Wrap yourself up well in your cloak, Christian; pull your fur cap over your ears, and keep your feet well covered with straw. Hop, Barabas, hop! we are crawling along like snails!”

At the same time he had recourse to his stone bottle of schiedam, and then wiping his lips with the back of his hand he offered it to me, with the remark—

“Take a pull at it, Christian, to keep the fog out of

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.

your stomach. It is a sea fog, the very worst of all fogs."

I thought it right to take Cappelmans' advice, and the goodness of the liquor put me in a good humour directly.

"My dear Christian," said my old master after a few moments' silence, "as we shall have to pass five or six hours in this fog with nothing to help us to pass the time but smoking our pipes and listening to the creaking of the cart, let us talk about Osterhaffen."

Then the good man began to give me a description of the tavern called the Jar of Tobacco, the house the best supplied with beer and spirits of any in Holland.

"It is situated in the lane of the Trois-Sabots," said he. "It is easily recognised a long way off by its large flat roof and small square windows overlooking the port. A great chestnut-tree stands opposite; on the right there is a skittle-alley running along an old moss-covered wall, and behind is the poultry-yard with hundreds of ducks, geese, fowls, and turkeys, the screaming, cackling, and quacking of which only cease at night.

"There is nothing very extraordinary in the great room of the tavern; but there, under the dark rafters of the ceiling, in clouds of blue smoke, at a counter made in the shape of a cask, sits enthroned the dreaded Herod van Gambrinus, surnamed the Bacchus of the North.

"This man can drink at a sitting two gallons of porter; treble X, ale, and lambic go down his throat as easily as down a tin funnel; it is only geneva which he acknowledges as a master.

"Woe be to the painter who sets foot in this pande-

monium! I tell you, Christian, he had better never have been born. Good-looking young serving-girls, with long yellow curls, are forward in offering their services, and Gambrinus holds out his large hairy hand, but it is but luring him to his soul's destruction; the victim leaves the tavern as the companions of Ulysses quitted the cavern of Circe."

After talking very gravely in this strain for some time, Cappelmans lighted his pipe and began to smoke in silence.

I had become very melancholy; an overpowering feeling of sadness took possession of me. It seemed I was getting every instant nearer an impassable gulf, and had it been possible I would have jumped out of the cart; and, God forgive me, I would have left my old master to prosecute his enterprise of danger alone.

The only thing, perhaps, which prevented my doing so was the impossibility of crossing those unknown marshes in the darkness of night. So I was obliged to follow the course of events, even if I suffered the fatal consequences which I anticipated.

About ten Master Andreusse fell asleep, his head dropped on my shoulder. I kept awake an hour longer, and then fatigue sent me, in my turn, to sleep.

I know not how long this state of rest lasted, but the cart stopped with a jolt, and the driver called out—

"Here we are!"

Cappelmans uttered an exclamation of surprise, while a cold shiver ran all over me from my head to my feet. If I lived a hundred years the Jar of Tobacco, such as I then saw it for the first time, with its little windows blazing with light, and its large roof reaching nearly

to the ground, will always be present to my recollection.

It was a very dark night. The sea was roaring about a hundred yards behind us, and I could hear the droning of bagpipes above the clamour of the waves.

In the darkness I could see the grotesque outlines of the dancers on the glass of the windows. It was quite the effect of a magic-lantern.

The dirty lane, lighted up by a horn lantern, the strange faces appearing and disappearing again into the darkness like rats in a drain, the uninterrupted drone of the bagpipes, the pony belonging to Van Eyck standing with his feet in the mud, Cappelmans wrapping his cloak still closer round him, and the moon half obscured by clouds, all contributed to confirm my apprehensions, and made me feel sadder than ever.

We were about to leave the cart, when from out the darkness a tall man suddenly advanced; he wore a large flapped hat, a pointed beard, turned-down collar on a velvet pourpoint, and a threefold gold chain round his neck, after the fashion of the ancient Flemish painters.

"Is it you, Cappelmans?" said this man, whose sharp profile was distinctly visible against the windows of the den before us.

"Yes, master," replied Andreusse, quite stupefied.

"Take care," said the unknown, raising his finger; "beware—the slayer of souls is waiting for you."

"Rest assured Andreusse Cappelmans will do his duty."

"That is well. You are a man of your word; the spirit of the old masters is on your side."

As he spoke the stranger disappeared in the dark-

ness, and Cappelmans, pale but resolute, got down from the cart.

I followed him, but I cannot describe in what a state of mind I was after this short dialogue.

We went up the dark passage, and Master Andreusse, who was leading the way, soon turned round to me and said—

“ Pay attention, Christian ! ”

He at the same time gave the door a push, and under hams, herrings, and strings of black puddings hanging from the black rafters of the ceiling I could see about a hundred men sitting in rows at long tables, some crouching like monkeys, with their shoulders up to their ears, others with their legs stretched out before them, their fur caps over their ears, and their backs against the wall, puffing forth volumes of smoke, which eddied along the room.

They all seemed to be laughing with their eyes half closed, their cheeks wrinkled to their ears, and appeared to be plunged in a state of drunken contentment.

On the right a blazing fire sent gleams of light from one end of the room to the other ; and here old Judith, who was as long and as thin as a broomstick, and her face purple with heat, was holding a frying-pan over the fire, in which she was preparing supper for some of the customers.

But what astonished me most of all was Herod Gambrinus himself seated at his counter, a little to the left, just as Master Andreusse had described him ; his shirtsleeves tucked up on his hairy arms, his elbows leaning on the board surrounded by shining pots, and his cheeks resting on his enormous fists, his thick red wig all in disorder, and his long yellow beard flowing

over his chest ; he was looking earnestly at the picture of the "Miraculous Draught," which was hanging up at one end of the room, just above the little wooden clock.

I had been watching him for some seconds, when outside the watchman's horn was audible close to the lane of the Trois-Sabots, and at the same moment old Judith, giving her frying-pan a toss, began to say with a sneer—

"Midnight ! the great painter Van Marius has been lying for twelve days in Osterhaffen Cemetery, and the avenger comes not !"

"He is here !" said Cappelmans, stepping forward into the room.

All eyes were fixed upon him, and Gambrinus, turning his head towards him, smiled, and began caressing his beard.

"Is that you, Cappelmans ?" said he in a jeering tone. "I have been expecting you ; so you have come to fetch away the 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes ?'"

"Yes !" replied Master Andreusse ; "I have promised Van Marius to finish his chef-d'œuvre, and finish it I will."

"You will—you will have it ?" returned the other "Comrade, that is easier said than done ; do you know that I won it, tankard in hand ?"

"I know it ; and I intend to win it back, tankard in hand, as you did."

"Then you are determined to play the great game ?"

"Yes, determined ; may the God of justice be on my side ! I will keep my word, or I roll under the table a vanquished man."

The eyes of Gambrinus glittered.

"You have heard him?" cried he, addressing himself to the toppers around him; "it is he who challenges me; let it be as he desires."

Then turning to Master Andreusse—

"Who is your umpire?"

"My umpire is Christian Rebstock," said Cappelmans, motioning to me to come forward.

I was in a terrific fright.

Then one of the spectators, Ignace van den Brock, Burgomaster of Osterhaffen, wearing a great flaxen wig, drew a paper from his pocket and read as follows like a schoolmaster:—

"The drinker's umpire has of right a white cloth, a clean glass, and a white candle; let him be supplied!"

And a tall, red-haired girl put those articles by my side.

"Who is your umpire?" asked Master Andreusse.

"Adam van Rasimus."

This Adam van Rasimus, with a pimpled nose, a villainous stoop, and a black eye, came and seated himself by me; he was supplied with the same articles by the same handmaid.

Then Herod, holding out his great hand across the counter to his adversary, called out—

"You have recourse neither to charms nor witchcraft!"

"Neither charms nor witchcraft," replied Cappelmans.

"Are without hatred towards me?"

"When I have avenged Fritz Coppelius, Tobias Vogel, the landscape-painter, Røemer, Nickel Brauer, Diderich Vinkelman, Van Marius, all painters of reputation, and drowned by you in ale and porter, and then

plundered of their labours by you, then I shall feel no hatred towards you."

Herod burst into a loud laugh, and stretching out his arms till his powerful shoulders touched the wall behind him, he exclaimed—

"I vanquished them, tankard in hand, honourably and loyally, as I am about to vanquish you. Their works have become my rightful property; and as to your hatred, I laugh at it and despise it. Drink!"

Then, my dear friends, began a struggle the like of which has never been known in Holland within the memory of man, and which will be talked of for ages to come if it pleases God. Black and White had met in arms; the destiny of one was about to be accomplished.

A cask of ale was placed on the table, and two pots containing a pint each were filled to the brim. Herod and Master Andreusse drank them off at once, and so on every half-hour with the regularity of a clock until the cask was empty.

Then they passed on to porter, and after porter to lambic.

I could easily tell you how many barrels of strong beer were emptied in this memorable battle; the burgomaster Van den Brock noted down the exact quantity in the parish register of Osterhaffen, for the information of future drinkers, but you would refuse to believe me, it would seem so incredible.

Let it suffice to tell you that the struggle lasted three days and three nights. The like had never been seen. It was the first time Herod had found himself in presence of an adversary capable of resisting him. The news, therefore, soon spread abroad; all the world,

on foot, on horseback, and in carts, hurried to the tavern; it was quite a procession; and as no one seemed inclined to leave before the termination of the struggle, it happened consequently that the second day the tavern was crammed with visitors; one could hardly move about, and the burgomaster was obliged to tap the table with his cane and call out, "Room! room!" to allow the cellarmen to carry the casks to the table on their shoulders.

All this time Master Andreusse and Gambrinus continued swallowing their pints with marvellous regularity. Sometimes, as I added up in my mind the number of quarts they had drunk, I thought I must be dreaming, and I would look uneasily at Cappelmans; but he would wink his eye, and say with a smile—

"Well, Christian, we are getting on; have a glass; it will do you good."

Then I was quite confounded.

"The soul of Van Marius possesses him, surely," I thought; "it must be that which keeps him up."

As for Gambrinus, with his little boxwood pipe between his lips, his elbow on the counter, and his cheek resting on his hand, he sat smoking his pipe like a respectable old shopkeeper taking his glass of beer while he thought over the affairs of the day.

It was inconceivable. The oldest drinkers themselves had never seen anything like it.

The morning of the third day, before the lights were extinguished, seeing the struggle threatened to be prolonged indefinitely, the burgomaster told Judith to bring a needle and thread for the first test.

Then there was great excitement, and every one came nearer to see how it would be.

According to the rules of the great game, the combatant who comes victorious from this ordeal has a right to choose what liquor he prefers for the rest of the battle,

Herod had laid his pipe down on the counter; he took the needle and thread which Van den Brock offered him, and raising his huge body, with his eyes coming out of his head, he lifted his arm, and applied the thread to the eye of the needle, but whether his hand was too heavy or the light of the candles dazzled his sight, he was obliged to make two attempts, which had a great effect on all the spectators; for they looked at one another quite bewildered.

"It is your turn, Cappelmans," said the burgomaster.

Then Master Andreusse rose, took the needle, and, at the first attempt, threaded it.

Frantic applause shook the room. I expected to see the whole building come down about our ears.

I looked at Gambrinus; his great fleshy face was puffed up with blood; his cheeks shook.

At the expiration of one minute, after silence had been obtained, Van den Brock struck three blows on the table, and then gravely asked—

"Master Cappelmans, your glory in Bacchus is great; what drink do you choose?"

"Schiedam," replied Master Andreusse—"old schiedam, the oldest and the strongest."

These words produced a surprising effect on the tavern-keeper.

"No," cried he—"no; beer if you will—always beer—no schiedam."

He got on his legs and looked frightfully pale.

"I regret," said the burgomaster briefly, "that the

regulations are formal. Let Cappelmans have what he chooses."

Then Gambrinus reseated himself like a criminal who hears his sentence of death, and they brought us some schiedam of the year '22, which Van Rasimus and I tasted to guard against any deception or adulteration.

The glasses were filled, and the struggle recommenced.

The whole population of Osterhaffen was thronging about the house and staring in at the windows.

The lights had been extinguished and it was broad daylight.

As the contest approached its dénouement the bystanders became more and more silent. All the customers were standing on chairs, on tables, and on empty barrels, watching attentively.

Cappelmans had called for a black-pudding, and was eating it with a good appetite, but Gambrinus was no longer the same man ; the schiedam had stupefied him ! His great crimson face was covered with perspiration, his ears were violet, his eyelids dropped ; sometimes a nervous shudder made him raise his head, and then with staring eyes and dropping lip he gazed at the sea of silent faces crowded together before him, and then he took his glass in both hands and drank while his throat rattled.

In all my life I never saw anything more horrible.

Every one saw that the tavern-keeper's defeat was certain.

"He is a lost man," said they. "He thought himself invincible, but he has met his master. Another glass or two and it is all over with him."

But there were some who thought otherwise ; they

declared that Herod might hold out three or four hours longer, and Van Rasimus offered to bet a cask of ale that he would not roll under the table before sundown; but a circumstance, trifling in itself, occurred which hastened the catastrophe.

It was nearly midday.

Nickel Spitz, the cellarman, had filled the jugs for the fourth time.

Old Judith, after having attempted in vain to put water to the schiedam, had just left the room drowned in tears, and we could hear her crying and lamenting in the next room.

Herod was dozing.

All at once the old clock began to grate and creak in a strange fashion; it struck twelve amidst a general silence, and the little wooden cock perched above the dial flapped his wings and began to crow.

Then, my dear friends, those who were in the room were spectators of a frightful scene.

When the cock began to crow the tavern-keeper raised himself to his full height, as if acted upon by an invisible spring.

I shall never forget that half-open mouth, those haggard eyes, and that face livid with fright.

I can see him now stretching out his hands to drive some horrid image away. I can hear him now screaming as if he was being strangled—

“That cock! O that cock!”

He tried to move, but his legs bent under him, and the terrible Herod van Gambrinus fell like an ox struck down by the butcher at the feet of Master Andreusse Cappelmans.

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The next day, about six in the morning, Cappelmans and I quitted Osterhaffen, carrying with us the picture of the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes."

Our return to Leyden was quite a triumph. The whole town, having heard of Master Andreusse's victory, came out to meet us in the streets; it was like a Sunday in fair time, but it seemed to have no effect on Cappelmans. He had not opened his mouth the whole journey home, and seemed very much preoccupied.

As soon as he reached his house his first order was that he was at home to no one.

"Christian," said the good man to me as he took off his great cloak, "I want to be alone. Go home to your aunt and try to work. When the picture is finished I will send Kobus to tell you."

He embraced me, and pushed me gently into the street.

One very fine day, about six weeks later, Master Andreusse came to my aunt Catherine to fetch me to see the picture.

The "Miraculous Draught of Fishes" was hanging against the wall opposite two lofty windows.

What a sublime work! Is it possible it can be in the power of man to produce such things? Cappelmans had thrown all his heart and all his genius into the work. The soul of Van Marius ought to be satisfied.

I could have remained there till night, mute with admiration, before this incomparable painting, if my old master, tapping me on the shoulder, had not said very solemnly—

"You find that very fine, do you not, Christian? Well, Van Marius had a dozen of similar chefs-

d'œuvre in his head. Unfortunately, he was too fond of ale and schiedam; his belly was his destruction. It is the fault of us Dutchmen. You are young; let this serve you for a lesson—sensuality is the enemy of everything that is great.”





THE CHILD-STEALER.





THE CHILD-STEALER.

I.



IN 1815, there was daily to be seen, wandering in the Hesse-Darmstadt quarter of Mayence, a tall emaciated woman, with hollow cheeks and haggard eyes; a frightful picture of madness. This unfortunate woman, named Christine Evig, a mattress-maker, living in the narrow street called Petit Volet, at the back of the cathedral, had lost her reason through the occurrence of a terrible event.

Passing one evening along the winding street of the Trois Bateaux, leading her little daughter by the hand, and suddenly observing that she had for a moment let go of the child, and no longer heard the sound of its steps, the poor woman turned and called—

“Deubche! Deubche! where are you?”

Nobody answered, and the street, as far as she could see, was deserted.

Then running, crying, calling, she returned to the port, and peered into the dark water lying beneath the vessels.

Her cries and moans drew the neighbours about her; the poor mother explained to them her agonies. They joined her in making fresh search, but nothing, not a

trace, not an indication, was discovered to throw light on this frightful mystery.

From that time Christine Evig had never again set foot in her home; night and day she wandered through the town, crying in a voice growing feebler and more plaintive—

“Deubche! Deubche!”

She was pitied. Sometimes one, sometimes another kind person gave her food and cast-off clothes. And the police, in presence of a sympathy so general, did not think it their duty to interfere and shut Christine up in a madhouse, as was usual at that period.

She was left therefore to go about as she liked, without any one troubling himself concerning her ways.

But what gave to the misfortune of Christine a truly sinister character was that the disappearance of her little daughter had been, as it were, the signal for several events of the same kind; a dozen children disappeared in an astonishing and inexplicable manner, several of them belonging to the upper rank of towns-people.

These events usually occurred at nightfall, when the street-passengers were few, and every one of them was hastening home from business. A wilful child went out to the doorstep of its parent's house, its mother calling after it, “Karl!” “Ludwig!” “Lotelé!”—absolutely like poor Christine. No answer! They rushed in every direction; the whole neighbourhood was ransacked; all was over!

To describe to you the inquiries of the police, the arrests that were made, the perquisitions, the terror of families, would be a thing impossible.

To see one's child die is, doubtless, frightful; but to

lose it without knowing what has become of it, to think that we shall never look upon it again, that the poor little being, so feeble and tender, which we have pressed to our heart with so much love, is ill perhaps—it may be calling for us, and we unable to help it—this passes all imagination—exceeds the power of human expression to convey.

Now one evening in the October of that year, 1817, Christine Evig, after having strayed about the streets, had seated herself on the trough of the Bishop's Fountain, her long grey hair hanging about her face, and her eyes wandering dreamily into vacancy.

The servant-girls of the neighbourhood, instead of stopping to chat as usual at the fountain, made haste to fill their pitchers and regain their masters' houses.

The poor mad woman stayed there alone, motionless, under the icy shower in which the Rhine mist was falling. The high houses around, with their sharp gables, their latticed windows, their innumerable dormer-lights, were slowly becoming enveloped in darkness.

The Bishop's Chapel clock struck seven, still Christine did not move, but sat shivering and murmuring—

“Deutche! Deutche!”

At that moment, while the pale hue of twilight yet lingered on the points of the roofs before finally disappearing, she suddenly shuddered from head to foot, stretched forward her neck, and her face, impassible for nearly two years, was lit with such an expression of intelligence, that Counsellor Trumf's servant, who was at the moment holding her pitcher to the spout, turned in astonishment at seeing this gesture of the mad woman's.

At the same moment, a woman, with head bent down,

passed along the pavement at the other side of the square, holding in her arms something that was struggling with her, enveloped in a piece of linen cloth.

Seen through the rain this woman was of striking aspect; she was hurrying away like a thief who has succeeded in effecting a robbery, slinking along in the shadow, her rags dragging behind her.

Christine Evig had extended her shrunken left hand, and a few inarticulate words fell from her lips; but suddenly a piercing cry escaped from her bosom—

“It is she!”

And bounding across the square, in less than a minute she reached the corner of the Rue des Vieilles Ferrailles, where the woman had passed out of her sight.

But there Christine stopped, breathless; the stranger was lost in the darkness of that filthy place, and nothing was to be heard but the monotonous sound of the water falling from the house-gutters.

What had passed through the mad woman's mind? What had she remembered? Had she had some vision—one of those insights of the soul that for a moment unshroud to us the dark depths of the past? I do not know.

By whatever means, she had recovered her reason.

Without losing a moment in pursuing the vanished apparition, the unfortunate woman hurried up the Rue des Trois Bateaux as if carried along by vertigo, and turning at the corner of the Place Gutenberg, rushed into the hall of the provost, Kasper Schwartz, crying in a hoarse voice—

“Monsieur le Prévôt, the child-stealers are discovered! Quick! listen! listen!”

The provost was just finishing his evening meal. He was a grave, methodical man, liking to take his ease after supper. Thus the sight of this phantom greatly disturbed him, and setting down the cup of tea he was in the act of raising to his lips, he cried—

“Good God! am I not to have a single moment’s quiet during the day? Can there possibly be a more unfortunate man than I am? What does this mad woman want with me now? Why was she allowed to come in?”

Recovering her calmness at these words, Christine replied in a suppliant manner—

“Ah, monsieur! you ask if there is a being more unfortunate than yourself; look at me — look at me!”

Her voice was broken with tears; her clenched hands put aside the long grey hair from her pale face. She was terrible to see.

“Mad! yes, my God! I have been mad; the Lord, in His mercy, hid from me my misfortune; but I am mad no longer. Oh, what I have seen! That woman was carrying off a child—for it was a child; I am sure of it.”

“Go to the devil, with your woman and child!—go to the devil!” cried the provost. Seeing the unfortunate woman throw herself upon her knees, “Hans! Hans!” he cried, “will you come and turn this woman out of doors? To the devil with the office of provost! It brings me nothing but annoyance.”

The servant appeared, and Monsieur Kasper Schwartz pointed to Christine—

“Show her out,” he said. “To-morrow I shall certainly draw out a warrant in due form, to rid the town

of this unfortunate creature. Thank Heaven we are not without madhouses !”

The mad woman laughed dreamily, while the servant, full of pity for her, took her by the arm, and said gently to her—

“Come, Christine—come.”

She had relapsed into madness, and murmured—

“Deubche !—Deubche !”

II.

WHILE these things were passing in the house of the provost, Kasper Schwartz, a carriage came down the Rue de l’Arsenal ; the sentinel on guard before the shot-park, recognising the equipage as that of Count Diderich, colonel of the Imperial regiment of Hilbourighausen, carried arms ; a salute answered him from the interior of the vehicle.

The carriage, drawn at full speed, seemed as if going towards the Porte d’Allemagne, but it took the Rue de l’Homme de Fer, and stopped before the door of the provost’s house.

As the colonel, in full uniform, got out, he raised his eyes, and appeared stupefied, for the shocking laughter of the mad woman made itself heard outside the house.

Count Diderich was a man about five-and-thirty or forty years of age, tall, with brown beard and hair, and a severe and energetic physiognomy.

He entered the provost’s hall abruptly, saw Hans leading Christine, and, without waiting to have himself announced, walked into Monsieur Schwartz’s dining-room, exclaiming—

“Monsieur, the police of your district is intolerable! Twenty minutes ago I stopped in front of the cathedral, at the moment of the Angelus. As I got out of my carriage, seeing the Countess Hilbourighausen coming down the steps of the cathedral, I moved on one side to allow her to pass, and I then found that my son—a child of three years old, who had been seated by my side—had disappeared. The carriage door on the side towards the bishop’s house was open: advantage had been taken of the moment when I was letting down the carriage steps to carry off the child! All the search and inquiries of my people have been fruitless. I am in despair, monsieur!—in despair!”

The colonel’s agitation was extreme; his dark eyes flashed like lightning through the tears he tried to repress; his hand clasped the hilt of his sword.

The provost appeared dumbfounded; his apathetic nature was distressed at the idea of having to exert himself and pass the night in giving orders, and going about from place to place—in short, to recommence, for the hundredth time, the hitherto fruitless search.

He would rather have put off the business till the next day.

“Monsieur,” replied the colonel, “understand that I will not be trifled with. You shall answer for my son with your head. It is your place to watch over the public security—you fail in your duty—it is scandalous! Oh that I at least knew who has struck the blow!”

While pronouncing these incoherent words, he paced up and down the room, with clenched teeth and sombre looks.

Perspiration stood on the purple brow of Master

Schwartz, who murmured, as he looked at the plate before him—

“I’m very sorry, monsieur—very sorry; but this is the tenth!—the thieves are much more clever than my detectives. What would you have me do?”

At this imprudent response the colonel bounded with rage, and seizing the fat provost by the shoulders, dragged him out of his arm-chair.

“What would I have you do?—Is that the answer you give to a father who comes to demand of you his child?”

“Let me go, monsieur!—let me go!” roared the provost, choking with alarm. “In Heaven’s name calm yourself! A woman—a mad woman—Christine Evig, has just been here—she told me—yes, I remember—Hans! Hans!”

The servant, who had overheard all at the keyhole, entered the room instantly.

“Monsieur?”

“Fetch back the mad woman.”

“She’s still outside, monsieur.”

“Well, bring her in. Pray sit down, colonel.”

Count Diderich remained standing in the middle of the room, and a moment afterwards Christine Evig returned, haggard, and laughing insanely, as she had gone out.

Hans and a servant-girl, curious as to what was passing, stood in the open doorway open-mouthed. The colonel, with an imperious gesture, made a sign to them to go away, then, crossing his arms and confronting Master Schwartz, he cried—

“Well, monsieur, what kind of intelligence do you expect to obtain from this unfortunate creature?”

The provost moved, as if he were going to speak; his fat cheeks shook.

The mad woman uttered a sort of sobbing laughter.

"Monsieur," said the provost, at length, "this woman's case is the same as your own; two years ago she lost her child, and that drove her mad."

The colonel's eyes overflowed with tears.

"Go on," he said.

"When she came here a little while ago she appeared to have recovered a spark of reason, and told me——"

Master Schwartz paused.

"What did she tell you, monsieur?"

"That she had seen a woman carrying a child."

"Ah!"

"Thinking that she was only raving, I sent her away."

The colonel smiled bitterly.

"You sent her away?" he cried.

"Yes; she seemed to me to have relapsed into her state of madness."

"Parbleu!" cried the count, in a tone of thunder, "you refuse assistance to this unfortunate woman? You drive away from her her last gleam of hope, instead of sustaining and defending her, as it is your duty to do? And you dare to retain your office!—you dare to receive its emoluments!"

He walked up close to the provost, whose wig trembled, and added, in a low concentrated tone—

"You are a scoundrel! If I do not recover my child, I'll kill you like a dog."

Master Schwartz, his staring eyes nearly starting from his head, his hands helplessly open, his mouth clammy, said not a word; terror held him by the throat; and besides, he knew not what to answer.

Suddenly the colonel turned his back on him, and going to Christine, looked at her for a few seconds, then, raising his voice—

“My good woman,” he said, “try and answer me. In the name of God—in the name of your child—where did you see that woman?”

He paused, and the poor woman murmured in a plaintive voice—

“Deubche!—Deubche!—they have killed her!”

The count turned pale, and, carried away by terror, seized the mad woman’s hand.

“Answer me, unfortunate creature!—answer me!” he cried.

He shook her; Christine’s head fell back; she uttered a peal of frightful laughter, and said—

“Yes—yes—it is done!—the wicked woman has killed it!”

The count felt his knees giving way, and sank rather than sat down upon a chair, his elbows upon the table, his pale face between his hands, his eyes fixed, as if gazing upon some fearful scene.

The minutes passed slowly in silence.

The clock struck ten; the sound made the colonel start. He rose, opened the door, and Christine went out.

“Monsieur,” said Master Schwartz.

“Hold your tongue!” interrupted the colonel, with a withering look.

And he followed the mad woman down the dark street.

A singular idea had come into his mind.

“All is lost,” he said to himself; “this unhappy woman cannot reason, cannot comprehend questions

put to her; but she has seen something—her instinct may lead her.”

It is almost needless to add that the provost was amazed. The worthy magistrate lost not a moment in double-locking his door; that done, he was carried away by a noble indignation.

“A man like me threatened!—seized by the collar! Aha, colonel! we’ll see whether there are any laws in this country! To-morrow morning I shall address a complaint to the Grand Duke, and expose to him the conduct of his officers,” &c.

III.

MEANWHILE the colonel followed the mad woman, and by a strange effect of the superexcitation of his senses, saw her in the darkness, through the mist, as plainly as in broad daylight; he heard her sighs, her confused words, in spite of the continual moan of the autumn winds rushing through the deserted streets.

A few late townspeople, the collars of their coats raised to the level of their ears, their hands in their pockets, and their hats pressed down over their eyes, passed, at infrequent intervals, along the pavements; doors were heard to shut with a crash, an ill-fastened shutter banged against a wall, a tile torn from a house-top by the wind fell into the street; then, again, the immense torrent of air whirled on its course, drowning with its lugubrious voice all other sounds of the night.

It was one of those cold nights at the end of October, when the weathercocks, shaken by the north wind, turn

giddily on the high roofs, and cry with shrilly voices, "Winter!—Winter!—Winter is come!"

On reaching the wooden bridge Christine leaned over the pier and looked down into the dark muddy water that dragged itself along in the canal; then, rising with an uncertain air, she went on her way, shivering and murmuring—

"Oh! oh!—it is cold!"

The colonel, clutching the folds of his cloak with one hand, pressed the other against his heart, which felt almost ready to burst.

Eleven o'clock was struck by the church of St. Ignatius, then midnight.

Christine Evig still went on; she had passed through the narrow streets of l'Imprimerie, of the Maillet, of the Halle aux Vins, of the Vieilles Boucheries, and of the Fosses de l'Evêch

A hundred times, in despair, the count had said to himself that this nocturnal pursuit would lead to nothing; but, remembering that it was his last resource, he followed her as she went from place to place, stopping, now by a corner-stone, now in the recess of a wall, then continuing her uncertain course—absolutely like a homeless brute wandering at hazard in the darkness.

At length, towards one o'clock in the morning, Christine came once more into the Place de l'Evêché. The weather appeared to have somewhat cleared up; the rain no longer fell, a fresh wind swept the streets, and the moon, now and then surrounded by dark clouds, now and then shining in full brilliancy, shed its rays, smooth and cold as blades of steel, upon the thousand pools of water lying in the hollows of the paving-stones.

The mad woman tranquilly seated herself on the edge of the fountain, in the place she had occupied some hours before. For a long time she remained in the same attitude, with dull eyes, and her rags clinging to her withered form.

All the count's hopes had vanished.

But, at one of those moments when the moon, breaking through the clouds, threw its pale light upon the silent edifices, she rose suddenly, stretched forward her neck, and the colonel, following the direction of her gaze, observed that it was fixed on the narrow lane of the Vieilles Ferrailles, about two hundred paces distant from the fountain.

At the same moment she darted forward like an arrow.

The count followed instantly upon her steps, plunging into the block of tall old buildings that overlook the church of St. Ignatius.

The mad woman seemed to have wings ; ten times he was on the point of losing her, so rapid was her pace through these winding lanes, encumbered with carts, dung-heaps, and faggots piled before the doors on the approach of winter.

Suddenly she disappeared into a sort of blind alley, pitch dark, and the colonel was obliged to stop, not knowing how to proceed further.

Fortunately, after a few seconds, the sickly yellow rays of a lamp pierced the darkness of the depths of this filthy hole, through a small cracked window-pane ; this light was stationary, but now and then it was momentarily obscured by some intervening figure.

Some one was evidently awake in that foul den.

What was being done ?

Without hesitation the colonel went straight towards the light.

In the midst of the obstructions he found the mad woman, standing in the mire, her eyes staring, her mouth open, looking at the solitary glimmer.

The appearance of the count did not seem at all to surprise her; only, pointing to the window on the first floor in which the light was seen, she said, "It's there!" in an accent so impressive that the count started.

Under the influence of this impulsion he sprang towards the door of the house, and with one pressure of his shoulder burst it open. Impenetrable darkness filled the place.

The mad woman was close behind him.

"Hush!" she cried.

And, once more giving way to the unfortunate woman's instinct, the count remained motionless and listened.

The profoundest silence reigned in the house; it might have been supposed that everybody in it was either sleeping or dead.

The clock of St. Ignatius struck two.

A faint whispering was then heard on the first floor, then a vague light appeared on a crumbling wall at the back; boards creaked above the colonel, and the light came nearer and nearer, falling first upon a ladder-staircase, a heap of old iron in a corner, a pile of wood; further on, upon a sash-window looking out into a yard, bottles right and left, a basket of rags—a dark, ruinous, and hideous interior.

At last a tin lamp with a smoky wick, held by a small hand, as dry and sinewy as the claw of a bird of prey, was slowly projected over the stair-rail, and above the

light appeared the head of an anxious-looking woman, with hair the colour of tow, bony cheeks, tall ears standing almost straight out from the head, light grey eyes glittering under deep brows—in short, a sinister being, dressed in a filthy petticoat, her feet in old shoes, her fleshless arms bare to the elbows, holding a lamp in one hand and in the other a sharp slater's hatchet.

Scarcely had this abominable being glared into the darkness than she rushed back up the stairs with astonishing agility.

But it was too late: the colonel had bounded after her, sword in hand, and seized the old witch by the petticoat.

“My child, wretch!” he cried; “my child!”

At this roar of the lion the hyæna turned and struck at random with her hatchet.

A frightful struggle ensued; the woman, thrown down upon the stairs, tried to bite; the lamp, which had fallen on the ground, burned there, its wick sputtering in the damp and throwing changing shadows on the dusky wall.

“My child!” repeated the colonel; “my child, or I'll kill you!”

“You—yes, you shall have your child,” replied the breathless woman in an ironical tone. “Oh! it's not finished—not—I've good teeth—the coward, to—to strangle me! Ho!—above, there!—are you deaf?—let me go—I'll—I'll tell you all.”

She was nearly exhausted, when another witch, older and more haggard, tottered down the stairs, crying—

“I'm here!”

The wretch was armed with a large butcher's knife,

and the count, looking up, saw that she was selecting a place in which to strike him between the shoulders.

He felt himself lost; a providential accident alone could save him.

The mad woman, until then a motionless spectator, sprang upon the old woman, crying—

“It is she!—there she is! Oh, I know her!—she shall not escape me!”

The only answer was a gush of blood, which inundated the landing place; the old woman had cut the unfortunate Christine’s throat.

It was the work of a second.

The colonel had time to spring to his feet and put himself on his guard; seeing which the two frightful old women fled rapidly up the stairs and disappeared in the darkness.

The flame of the smoky lamp flickered in the oil, and the count took advantage of its last rays to follow the murderers. But on reaching the top of the stairs, prudence counselled him not to abandon this point of egress.

He heard Christine breathing below, and drops of blood fell from stair to stair in the midst of the silence. It was horrible!

On the other hand, a sound at the back of the den made the count fear that the two women were attempting to escape by the windows.

Ignorance of the place for a moment prevented his moving from the spot on which he was standing, when a ray of light shining through a glass door allowed him to see the two windows of a room looking into the alley lit by a light from without. At the same time he heard, in the alley, a loud voice call out—

“Hallo!—what’s going on here? A door open!”

“Come this way!—come this way!” cried the colonel.

At the same moment the light gleamed inside of the house.

“Ah!” cried the voice, “blood! The devil!—I can’t be mistaken—it’s Christine!”

“Come here!” repeated the colonel.

A heavy step sounded on the stairs, and the hairy face of the watchman, Sélig, with his big otter-skin cap, and his goat-skin over his shoulders, appeared at the head of the stairs, directing the light of his lantern towards the count.

The sight of the uniform astonished the worthy fellow.

“Who’s there?” he inquired.

“Come up, my good fellow, come up!”

“Pardon, colonel—but, down below, there’s——”

“Yes—a woman has been killed; her murderers are in this house.”

The watchman ascended the few remaining stairs, and, holding up his lantern, threw a light on the place; it was a landing about six feet square, on to which opened the door of the room in which the two women had taken refuge. A ladder on the left hand, leading up to the garret-story, still further contracted the space.

The count’s paleness astonished Sélig. However, he dared not question the colonel, who asked—

“Who lives here?”

“Two women—a mother and daughter; they are called about the market the Jösels. The mother sells butcher’s meat in the market, the daughter makes sausage meat.”

The count, recalling the words uttered by Christine in her delirium—"Poor child!—they have killed it!"—was seized with giddiness, and a cold perspiration burst from his forehead.

By the most frightful chance he discovered, at the same instant, behind the stairs, a little frock of blue and red tartan, a pair of small shoes, and a black cap, thrown there out of the light. He shuddered, but an invincible power urged him on to look—to contemplate with his own eyes; he approached, therefore, trembling from head to foot, and with a faltering hand raised these articles of dress.

They had belonged to his child!

Some drops of blood stained his fingers.

Heaven knows what passed in the count's heart. For a long while, leaning for support against the wall, with fixed eyes, arms hanging helplessly by his side, and open mouth, he remained as if stunned. But suddenly he sprang against the door with a yell of fury that terrified the watchman. Nothing could have resisted such a shock. Within the room was heard the crashing of the furniture which the two women had piled up to barricade the entrance; the building shook to its foundation. The count disappeared into the obscurity; then came shrieks, wild cries, imprecations, hoarse clamours, from the midst of the darkness.

There was nothing human in it; it was as if wild beasts were tearing each other to pieces in the recesses of their den!

The alley filled with people. The neighbours from all sides rushed into the house, inquiring—

"What's the matter? Are they murdering one another here?"

Suddenly all became silent, and the count, covered with wounds from a knife, his uniform in tatters, came down the stairs, his sword red to the hilt; even his moustaches were blood-stained, and those who saw him must have thought that he had been fighting after the manner of tigers.

* * * *

What more is there for me to tell you?

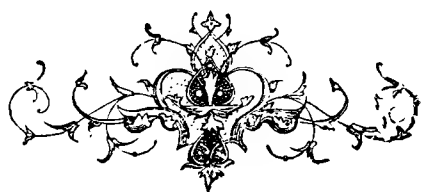
Colonel Diderich was cured of his wounds, and disappeared from Mayence.

The authorities of the town considered it judicious to keep these horrible details from the parents of the victims; I learned them from the watchman Sélig himself, after he had grown old, and had retired to his village near Saarbrück. He alone knew these details, having appeared as witness at the secret inquiry which was instituted before the criminal tribunal of Mayence.





BLACK AND WHITE.





BLACK AND WHITE.



I.

UP to that moment I had always regarded Theodore Blitz as a sort of mystical idiot; the power he assumed of keeping up a correspondence with invisible spirits, by means of music composed of all the sounds in nature—the quivering of the leaves, the murmur of the wind, the hum of insects, &c.—seemed to me ridiculous, nor was I alone in my opinion.

It was all very well for him to say if the organ arouses religious feelings in us, if martial music excites martial ardour, and rural music tends to render us disposed to contemplation; the advent of Theodore Blitz, who came to us from Jena with a letter of introduction from Harmorius, with his black eyes, his neglected brown hair, his pale thin nose, his peremptory manner of speaking, and his mysterious ideas, caused some little confusion amongst us. We used to be surprised to see him get up suddenly, take two or three

turns round the room gesticulating all the time, turn the Swiss views on the walls, with blue lakes, apple-green mountains, and red pathways, strangely into ridicule; then seat himself again, swallow his beer at a draught, begin a discussion on the music of Palestine, the lute of the Hebrews, on the introduction of the organ into our basilicas, on the Lepher, or Sabbatical epochs, &c.; then frown, plant both elbows on the table, and lose himself in profound thought.

Yes, that used to surprise serious people like ourselves, accustomed to a methodical way of thinking; but we were obliged to give way; and even Rothau the engineer, though at first rather sarcastic in his remarks, finished by becoming reconciled to it, and left off contradicting the young chapelmaster, whether he was right or wrong.

It was clear Theodore Blitz possessed one of those nervous organisations which feel every change of temperature, and that year it was excessively hot; we had several violent storms towards the autumn, and we began to tremble for the vintage.

One evening our society was assembled at the same table as usual, with the exception of old Ulmet, the magistrate, and the young chapelmaster. The burgo-master was discussing hailstorms and great hydraulic works; I was listening to the wind raging outside among the plane-trees in the Schloss Garden, and the rain beating against the windows. From time to time we heard a tile come rattling down from the roof, a door closed with a bang, a lone shutter beating against the wall, then the roar of the storm, bellowing, whistling, and groaning in the distance, as if all the spirits of the air were seeking and calling on one another in the

darkness, while the living hid themselves and huddled themselves away in corners to avoid the ill-luck attendant on meeting them.

St. Landolph's Chapel was striking nine when Theodore Blitz entered, shaking his hat like a lunatic, and crying out with his shrill voice—

“Now the devil is having it all his own way; black and white are mingled together. Nine times nine thousand nine hundred and ninety thousand En vies are fighting and beating one another to pieces! Go on, Arimane! wander abroad—ravage—devastate! The Amschaspauls are put to flight! Oromaze hides his face! What weather! what weather!”

He ran about the room while he was uttering this rhapsody, stretching out his long skinny legs and laughing spasmodically.

We were all astounded at such an apparition; for some seconds no one uttered a word; but at last Rothau, the engineer, prompted by his caustic humour, cried out—

“What fustian have you been declaiming, master organist? what do you mean by the Amschaspauls? and the nine hundred and ninety thousand En vies? Ha! ha! ha! It is really too absurd; where have you been to learn these singular expressions?”

Theodore Blitz stopped short, and shut one eye, while the other, which remained wide open, twinkled with diabolical irony.

“Oh, engineer! oh, sublime spirit! master of the trowel and mortar!” said he; “director of stone-work, ordainer of angles right, acute, and obtuse, you are right; yes, over and over again right!”

Then he made him a bow in derision.

"Nothing exists but matter, the level, the rule, and the compass; the revelations of Zoroaster, Moses, Pythagoras, Odin, and Christ; harmony, melody, and sentiment are dreams unworthy of an intellect as clear as yours; truth, eternal truth, belongs to you alone; ha! ha! I prostrate myself at the feet of your glory, as imperishable as that of Nineveh and Babylon!"

Having delivered this address with inconceivable rapidity, he turned on his heel and laughed; but so shrilly that one would have thought it was the cock saluting the approaching morn.

Rothau was beginning to grow angry, but at that moment the old magistrate Ulmett came in, his head buried in his great otter-skin cap, and his shoulders covered with a bottle-green great-coat, trimmed with fox-skin, the sleeves hanging down his back, his shoulders up to his ears, his eyelids half closed, and his great nose and fat cheeks dripping with rain.

He was as wet as a duck.

"O Lord!" exclaimed the good man, "one must be mad to go out in such weather as this, especially after such exertions—two inquiries, two procès-verbal, and then the examinations. Bok-bier and the society of old friends would tempt me to swim the Rhine."

Outside the rain was falling in torrents, the water was pouring down the gutters, the rain-pipes were overflowing, and rivulets had swelled into rivers.

While the magistrate was talking he took off his otter-skin cap, opened his pelisse to take his long pipe from Ulm and his tobacco-pouch and his box of matches out of his pocket, which he laid carefully on the table. Then he hung his cap and great-coat on the curtain-rod of the window, and called out—

“Brauer!”

“What does the magistrate wish?”

“You would do well to close the shutters; this deluge of rain may very probably end in a thunderstorm.”

The brewer immediately went out, and the shutters were closed, and the old judge sat down in his corner and sighed deeply.

“You know what has happened, burgomaster?” said he sadly.

“No, my old friend Christophel!”

Before he replied Ulmett looked attentively all round the room.

“We are alone, my friends,” said he, “so I can venture to tell you. About three this afternoon they found poor Grédel Dick in the mill-dam at Holderloch!”

“In the mill-dam at Holderloch!” we all exclaimed mechanically.

“Yes, with a rope round her neck.”

That you may understand me more fully why these words shocked us all so much, I should tell you that Grédel Dick was one of the prettiest girls in Vieux-Brisach, tall and dark, with blue eyes and rosy cheeks; the only daughter of the old anabaptist Peter Dick, who rented the extensive lands belonging to the Schloss Garden. It had been noticed for some time past that she had become grave and out of spirits; she was once so gay at the washing-place in the morning, and at the fountain in the evening. She had been seen crying, and her trouble was supposed to arise from the incessant pursuit of Sapheri Mutz, the son of the postmaster, a strong, hard fellow, with aquiline nose and black curly hair, who followed her like her shadow, and never let go her arm on Sundays at the dance.

Their marriage had been talked about, but Father Mutz, his wife, Karl Bremer his son-in-law, and his daughter Soffayel were very much opposed to the match, alleging as a reason that a heathen could not be admitted into the family.

Grédel had been missing for three days; no one knew what had become of her. And so you may imagine the thousand conjectures which were formed as to how she met her death. No one cared about the discussion about invisible spirits between Rothau the engineer and Theodore Blitz. All eyes were turned upon Christophel Ulmet, who, with his large head bent down, and his thick white eyebrows contracted, was filling his pipe in a thoughtful mood.

"And Mutz—Sapheri Mutz—what has become of him?" the burgomaster inquired.

The old man's cheeks coloured up a little, and after some seconds' reflection he replied—

"Sapheri Mutz has disappeared."

"Disappeared!" cried little Kleis; "that is as much as to say he murdered her."

"So it appears to me," said the old magistrate slowly; "one does not run away for nothing—in fact, we have made a domiciliary visit at his father's, and we found the whole family in a state of agitation. They seemed terribly alarmed; the mother cried and tore her hair; their daughter had put on her Sunday clothes and was dancing about the house like a mad woman; it was impossible to learn anything from them. As to Grédel's father, the poor man is in despair; he will not say anything which might compromise his daughter's reputation; but he is positive that Grédel Dick left the farm of her own goodwill last

Tuesday to follow Sapheri. This fact is proved by all their neighbours. Well, the gendarmes have taken it in hand ; we shall see what they can do."

There was a long silence, while out of doors the rain came down in torrents.

"It is horrible!" the burgomaster suddenly called out—"it is horrible, when we think that fathers of families, who bring up their children in the fear of God, are exposed to such misery as this."

"Yes," replied Ulmett, lighting his pipe, "so it is. It is all very well to say that everything takes place according to the ordering of the Lord ; in my opinion the spirits of darkness have a great deal more to do with our affairs than is good for us. For one honest man how many faithless and lawless vagabonds do we meet with? And for one good action how many crimes? Let me ask you, my friends, if the devil would only count his flock——"

He had not time to finish his sentence before a vivid flash of lightning shone through the cracks in the shutters, and made the light of the lamp seem dim, almost immediately followed by a clap of thunder—such a clap!—short, crashing ; something to make your hair stand on end. One would have thought the earth was about to open.

The church of St. Landolph was just striking the half-hour, and the vibration of the bell seemed only a few yards distant, when a weak, plaintive voice was heard a long way off calling—

"Help ! help !"

"Some one is calling for help," said the burgomaster.

"Yes," repeated the rest, looking very pale and attentively listening.

And while we all sat there in a state of terror, Rothau began to sneer and call out—

“Ah! ah! it is only Mademoiselle Ræsel’s cat singing a love song to Mr. Roller, the young tenor on the first floor.”

Then raising his voice and his hand like a tragic actor, he added—

“Midnight was striking at the Castle chapel——”

This tone of mocking raised general indignation.

“Evil be to those who turn such events as these into subjects of ridicule!” said old Christophel, rising.

He walked towards the door with solemn steps, and we all followed him, even the fat brewer, holding his cotton nightcap in his hand, and muttering a prayer as if just about to appear in his Maker’s presence.

Rothau was the only one who did not move. I kept behind the others, stretching my neck out to look over their shoulders. The glass door hardly opened before there came another flash of lightning.

The street, with its pavement washed white by the rain, its overflowing gutters, its thousands of windows, its ruinous gables, and its signs, seemed to spring distinctly forward out of the night, then retreated and disappeared in darkness.

That one glimpse showed me Saint Landolph’s tower and its numerous little statues draped in light by the lightning, the lower part of the bells, their clappers and their ropes leading down into the nave; the storks’ nest demolished by the storm, the little ones with their beaks wide open, and the old bird hovering about them, flying round the sparkling spire with her projecting head, neck thrown back, and her long legs

stretched out behind her as if in defiance of the zigzag streaks of lightning all round her.

It was a strange vision, like a Chinese painting.

We all stood with our mouths open on the threshold of the brewery door, asking one another—

“What did you hear, Mr. Ulmett? Did you see anything, Mr. Kleis?”

Just then a plaintive mew was heard over our heads, and a regiment of cats scrambled along the gutter. A burst of laughter was heard in the room at the same time.

“Well,” cried the engineer, “did you hear them? Was I wrong, after all?”

“It was nothing, thank God,” said the old magistrate. “Let us go in—it is beginning to rain again.”

And as he went to take his seat again he said—

“You must not be surprised, Mr. Rothau, that an old man like myself loses his presence of mind when heaven and earth meet together thus, and love and hatred join hands together, to develop crimes unknown in our country till now. Can you be surprised at it?”

We had all taken our places again, with a feeling of disgust at the engineer, who was the only one who had remained calm, and who had seen us all tremble; we turned our backs on him and emptied our glasses one after the other in silence, while he leaned his elbow on the window-sill, whistling some military march, and beating time to it with his fingers against the glass, without condescending to notice our ill-humour.

This lasted a few minutes, when Theodore Blitz laughed, and began again—

“Mr. Rothau is triumphant; he has no faith in in-

visible spirits; nothing disturbs him—his sight and hearing are good; what more does he require to convict us of folly and ignorance?"

"Why," replied Rothau, "I did not venture to say as much; but you define it so cleverly, master organist, that I will not contradict you, particularly as far as regards yourself; for, with respect to my old friends Schultz, Ulmetz, Kleis, and the rest, the case is different—very different. It may happen to us to have unpleasant dreams, only it must not become a regular habit."

Instead of making any reply to this direct attack, Blitz leaned his head out of the window, and seemed to listen to some noise outside.

"Hush!" said he, looking back at us—"hush!"

He raised his finger at the same time, and his expression of countenance was so remarkable that we all listened with a vague sensation of terror.

At the same time heavy steps could be heard splashing through the swollen gutter, a hand felt for the door handle, and the chapelmaster called, or rather screamed out to us—

"Be calm; listen and behold! may the Lord protect us!"

The door opened, and Sapheri Mutz appeared.

Were I to live a thousand years that man's face will always be impressed on my memory. There he stands! I see him now! he staggers forward, pale as death, his eyes dull and glassy, his hair hanging over his forehead, his blouse rolled up round his waist, a heavy stick in his hand. A rivulet of mud streams from his clothes; he stops, coughs, and says in a whisper, as if he was speaking to himself—

"Here I am! arrest me! cut my head off! that's what I want!"

Then rousing himself, and looking at us all round one after the other with an expression of terror—

"I said something! what did I say? Ah, the burgomaster is there; and Ulmett the magistrate too!"

He turned to make his escape, but something he seemed to see in the darkness forced him back into the room.

Theodore Blitz had risen from his chair; and after casting a warning glance at us, he walked up to Mutz, and said to him confidentially—

"Is he there?"

"Yes!" said the assassin in the same mysterious tone.

"He has been following you, has he?"

"From Fischbach!"

"Always behind you?"

"Yes, always behind me."

"Just so," said the organist, "just so;" and he looked round at us again; "so it is always. Well, stay, Sapheri; sit down by the fire. Brauer, go and fetch the gendarmes."

At the word gendarmes the wretch grew paler than ever, and would again have turned to fly, but the same feeling of horror drove him back; and he sank down at a table in the corner and buried his face in his hands.

"If I had but known it! If I had only known it!" he cried.

We were all more dead than alive. The brewer had just left the room. Not a breath could be heard in the room. The old magistrate had laid his pipe down; the burgomaster looked at me in consternation; Rothau left off whistling. Theodore Blitz was seated at the end of

a bench, with his legs crossed, and seemed occupied in watching the rain trickling down the window-panes.

And so we sat for a quarter of an hour, afraid all the time the assassin would make up his mind to escape; but he never stirred; his long hair hung down between his fingers, while the water ran in a stream from his clothes on to the floor.

At last the clank of arms was audible outside; the two gendarmes, Werner and Keltz, appeared on the threshold. Keltz just glanced at the assassin, took off his hat, and said, "Good evening, your worship," to the magistrate.

Then he walked in and quietly handcuffed Sapheri, who still tried to hide his face.

"Come, follow me, my lad," said he. "Werner, close up."

A third gendarme, a short, thickset fellow, was just visible in the gloom of the passage, and the whole troop moved off. The wretched man made not the slightest resistance.

We looked at one another's pale faces in silence.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said the organist.

And he walked off.

We all were so lost in reflection on what we had just witnessed that we rose and went each to his home without uttering an observation. I am not ashamed to confess that before I reached my own door I had turned my head round twenty times, fancying I could hear "the other," that one who had followed Sapheri Mutz, close behind me. And when at last, thanks be to Heaven, I found myself in my own room, before putting out the light and getting into bed I took the wise precaution of looking under it to convince myself

that the personage, whoever he might be, was not there. I believe, too, that I repeated a certain prayer, to prevent him from strangling me in my sleep. Well, we are not philosophers on all occasions.

II.

IN those days we used to pass our evenings at Brauer's brewery, which stands in the square at Vieux-Brisach. Soon after eight came Frederic Schultz, the notary; Frantz Martin, the burgomaster; Christophel Ulmet, the magistrate; Councillor Kleis; Rothau, the engineer; Theodore Blitz, the young organist, one after the other, and several other honourable burghers of the town, who all sat at the same table, and discussed their foaming bok-bier like neighbours.

It is because these various melodies are invocations to the genii of the earth, which make a sudden appearance amongst us, act upon our organs, and make us sharers in their own essence; these were all obscure terms to me, and I have hitherto entertained no doubt that the organist's upper-works were somewhat deranged. But since this last occurrence my opinion in this respect had been very much shaken, and I said to myself that man, after all, is not a purely material being; that we consist of a body and soul; that to attribute everything to the body, and to seek thereby to explain everything, is far from reasonable; that the nervous fluid, agitated by the currents of air, is quite as difficult to understand as the direct action of invisible forces; one knows not why a simple pleasing movement according to the rules of counterpoint can provoke emotions either

agreeable or terrible, raise our soul towards God, bring it face to face with nothingness, or awake in us all the ardour of existence, enthusiasm, love, fear and pity. No ; I no longer considered this a satisfactory explanation ; the chapelmaster's ideas seemed now grander, more forcible, juster, and more acceptable in every point of view.

Besides, what explanation could a nervous sensation afford of Sapheri Mutz's appearance at the brewery, or how account for the wretch's terror which forced him to give himself up, and the foresight of Blitz, when he said—"Hush ! listen ! here he comes. May the Lord protect us !"

All things considered, my prejudices against the invisible world were disappearing fast, and fresh facts occurred to confirm me in this new way of thinking.

About a fortnight after the scene I have described Sapheri Mutz was transferred by the gendarmes to the prison at Stuttgart. The thousand and one rumours put in circulation by Grédel Dick's death began to die away ; the poor girl slept in peace behind the hill of the Three Fountains, and people began discussing the prospects of the approaching vintage.

About five one evening, as I was leaving the custom-house stores, where I had been to taste some wine for Brauer, who in this respect had more confidence in my palate than in his own, with a somewhat heavy head I turned my steps by chance towards the long plane-tree avenue behind Saint Landolph's church.

On my right the Rhine was displaying its floods of blue, into which some fishermen were casting their nets ; on my left rose the ancient fortifications of the town. The air was beginning to grow cool ; the waters

were singing their everlasting hymn; the breeze from the Schwartz-Wald was rustling among the leaves, and as I walked along thinking of nothing, the sound of a violin struck my ear.

I listened.

No black-headed linnet ever sang its rapid trill with more grace or delicacy, nor was the flow of its execution ever more inspired with enthusiasm. But it resembled nothing I had ever heard before; there was neither pause nor time; it was a deluge of frenzied notes, admirably accurate, but without method and arrangement; and sometimes in the midst of an outburst of inspired melody a shrill, sharp, cutting note would penetrate one's body like a knife.

"Theodore Blitz must be somewhere near," said I to myself, as I pushed apart the branches of a hedge of elder-trees at the foot of the slope.

Then I found myself about thirty paces from the guardroom near a pond covered with duckweed, where enormous frogs showed their yellow throats. Farther on were the stables and large sheds, and then the dwelling-house all in ruins. Five or six hens were in the yard, which had a wall round it, with rusty iron gates, and under a shed rabbits were running about; they soon saw me, and disappeared like shadows under the barn-door.

No sound to be heard but the murmur of the stream and the continued fantasia on the violin.

How came Theodore Blitz there?

The idea came into my head that he was trying some musical experiment on the Mutz family, and, urged by curiosity, I glided behind the wall to see what was going on at the farm.

The windows were all wide open, and in a long lower room, with brown rafters across the ceiling, on a level with the yard, I could see a table spread with all the profusion noticeable in village fêtes ; there were places laid for more than thirty, but what stupefied me was to see only five persons present ; the father Mutz, serious and abstracted, in a black velvet coat with metal buttons, his large bony grey head, with his features contracted by some fixed idea, his hollow eyes staring at vacancy ; the son-in-law thin and insignificant-looking, his shirt-collar reaching above his ears ; the mother in a high cambric cap with a look of bewilderment ; the daughter a pretty dark-eyed woman in a black sarcenet cap, with gold and silver spangles, and a handkerchief with all the colours of the rainbow across her head.

Last of all Theodore Blitz, his cocked hat on his ear, his violin held tightly between his shoulder and his chin, his little sparkling black eyes, one long wrinkle traversing his cheek, and his elbows working up and down like a grasshopper scraping a tune in the heather.

The shadows cast by the setting sun, the old time-piece with its earthenware dial, painted with red and blue flowers, the corner of the grey and white checked curtain drawn across the recess ; and the music, which became every moment more and more discordant, produced an impression upon me which I cannot describe ; I was really and truly panic-struck. Was it a consequence of the Rudesheimer I had been inhaling so long in the custom-house cellars ? was it the wan tints of approaching evening ? I cannot say ; but, without looking any longer, I stooped down and crept along the wall to reach the road, when a large dog jumped out at

me as far as his chain would allow him, and made me call out with surprise.

"Tirik!" cried the old postmaster.

And then Theodore, having recognised me, ran out of the room calling out—

"Here, Christian Spéciès, come in, Christian; you arrive just in time."

He crossed the court, and taking me by the arm—

"My dear friend," said he, with a strange animation in his voice and face, "this is the hour when Black and White are struggling for the mastery. Come in! come in!"

The excited state in which he was frightened me, but he paid no attention to my observations, and dragged me along so fast that it was useless to offer any resistance.

"You must know, my dear Christian," said he, "that this morning we baptised an angel of the Lord, little Nickel Sapheri Bremer. I celebrated his entry into this world of pleasure by a chorus of seraphim. And now, just fancy, three-fourths of our guests have taken flight—ha! ha! ha! Come in, then, you are sure to be welcome."

He pushed me forward by the shoulders, and so, in spite of myself, I crossed the threshold of the door.

All the members of the Mutz family turned round towards me. It was useless for me to refuse to sit down; they overpowered me with their welcome.

"He makes the sixth," cried Blitz, "and six is a lucky number."

The old postmaster came and shook hands with me warmly, saying, as he did so—

"Thanks, Mr. Spéciès, a thousand thanks for coming!

They cannot say now that all good people avoid us—that we are abandoned by God and man! You will stay with us to the end, will you not?”

“Yes,” stammered the old woman, with a look of entreaty, “Mr. Spéciès must stay with us to the end; he cannot refuse us that.”

I could then comprehend why the table was so large and the number of guests so small. All those who had been invited to the christening, mindful of poor Grédel Dick's fate, had excused themselves from attending.

Their state of melancholy abandonment made my heart ache, and I could not help replying—

“Most certainly, with pleasure—with great pleasure.”

Glasses were filled, and we drank a rough, strong old Marcobrunner wine, the harsh bouquet of which gave my thoughts a melancholy direction.

The old woman laid her long skinny hand on my shoulder, saying—

“One more glass, Monsieur Spéciès, only one glass.”

And I was afraid to refuse. At that moment Blitz drew his bow across the strings of his violin, and made me shiver in every limb.

“This, my friends,” he called out, “is Saul's invocation to the Witch of Endor.”

I should have made my escape if it had been practicable; but outside the dog was howling most lamentably; night was approaching, the room was filling with spectres; the strongly-marked features of the father Mutz, his wandering eyes, and the painful contraction of his jaws, did not encourage me to make a stir. Blitz continued strumming away his invocation to the pythoness, his cheeks became more wrinkled, and the perspiration was streaming down his face.

The postmaster filled up our glasses again, and said to me in a savage, imperious tone—

“Your health!”

“The same to you, Monsieur Mutz,” replied I, all in a tremble.

All at once the child in its cradle began to cry, and Blitz, with diabolical irony, accompanied it on his violin, exclaiming—

“That is the hymn of life. Ha! ha! ha! Little Nickel will sing it a good many times before he loses the hair on his head.”

The old clock in its walnut case began to creak and grate, and when I looked up, surprised at the noise, I saw a thin, bald, hollow-eyed little automaton come out of a box above the dial—in short, a representation of Death, which took two or three steps forward and began to mow in jerks sundry blades of grass painted on the edge of the case. Then, at the last stroke, it made a pirouette and disappeared in its box, whence it came.

“The devil take the organist for bringing me here!” said I to myself; “a gay christening truly, and pleasant people to be amongst!”

I filled up my glass once more to give myself courage.

Come, come, it was my fate to do so; no one can change his destiny, and mine was, since time began, to leave the custom-house this evening, take a turn in St. Landolph’s Avenue, be brought, in spite of myself, into this den of cut-throats, drawn thither by Blitz’s music, to drink Marcobrunner smelling of wormwood and cypress, and to see a wooden Death mowing painted grass. It is funny. It is really very funny.

And so I went on, thinking on the chances in our existence, when men think themselves free agents, and

all the time are led on by threads attached to the stars. The magi have said so before, and we ought to believe them.

So I sat, mused, and laughed in the shadow till the music ceased.

A deep silence succeeded, only broken by the clock's monotonous ticking, and out of doors the moon on the other side of the Rhine was gently rising from behind the poplars, and its pale light ricocheted over the quivering waves. As I was watching it a black boat crossed the line of light; a man was standing up in the boat, black too, a short cloak floating from his shoulders, and a large hat with wide brim and streamers attached to it.

He passed on like a dream; my eyelids felt like lead.

"Drink!" the organist called out. The glasses clinked.

"How well the Rhine sings! It is singing Barthold Gouterolf's hymn," said the son-in-law, "'Ave, Ave, Stella!'"

No one answered him.

And at a distance, a long way off, we could hear two oars keeping time in their stroke.

"This is the day Sapheri ought to receive his pardon," said the old postmaster suddenly in his harshest tones.

No doubt he had long been pondering over this idea, and it was that which made him so gloomy. I shuddered.

"He is thinking about his son," said I to myself—"his son who ought to be hanged."

"His pardon!" broke in the daughter with a strange laugh. "Yes, his pardon."

Theodore tapped me on the shoulder, and leaning over to me whispered in my ear—

“The spirits are coming—they are here!”

“If you talk of such things,” cried the son-in-law, whose teeth were chattering—“if you talk so I shall go.”

“Go, you trembling fool!” cried the daughter; “we don’t want you here.”

“Well, then, I shall go at once,” said he, rising; and, taking his hat down from the wall, he left the room with hurried steps.

I saw him walk quickly past the window, and I envied him.

How could I manage to get away?

There was something moving on the wall opposite; on looking closely I saw it was a cock. Farther on, between the broken palings, I could see the river shining and slowly casting its long waves on the shore, the light danced over them like a cloud of gulls with their silvery wings.

My head was full of spectres and blue lights.

“Look here, Peter,” cried the old woman. “Listen to me; you were the cause of all that has happened.”

“I!” said the old man in a hollow tone. “How am I the cause?”

“Yes, you never had any pity on the boy; you never forgave him anything. Why would you not let him have the girl?”

“Wife,” said the old man, “instead of accusing others, think of the blood which is on your own head. For the last twenty years you have done nothing but conceal your son’s faults from me. Whenever I punished him for his bad disposition, his savage temper, or his

drunkenness, you—you consoled him, cried with him, supplied him secretly with money, and said to him, ‘Your father loves you not; he is a hard man,’ and you lied to make him love you the more. You robbed me of the trust and respect which a child owes the father who loves and corrects him, and when he wanted to take up with this girl I had not sufficient influence over him to make him obey me.”

“You had only to say ‘Yes,’” yelled the old woman.

“And I,” said the old man, “I said ‘No!’ because my mother, my grandmother, and all the men and women of my family would refuse to receive this heathen in heaven.”

“In heaven!” answered the old woman—“in heaven!”

“As long as I can remember,” added the daughter in a whining tone, “father never gave us anything but blows.”

“Because you deserved them,” replied the old man; “they gave me more pain than you.”

“More pain, indeed, more pain, truly!”

At that moment a hand touched my arm. I started it was Blitz. A ray of moonlight streaming through the glass flooded him with light; his pale face and his extended arm stood out clear of the darkness. I looked in the direction to which his finger pointed, and I saw the most terrible sight I ever recollect having seen. A motionless blue shadow seemed to stand out in front of the window, above the white sheet of water. This shadow was a human form, and seemed suspended between earth and heaven. His head hung forward on his breast, his elbows were squared behind his back, and

his legs hung straight down with his feet coming to a point.

And while I stared at him with horror-struck eyes, I noticed every detail in this ghastly apparition. I could recognise Sapheri Mutz, and above his shoulders the rope, the arm, and framework of a gibbet. Then below these dismal details a white figure on its knees, with dishevelled hair—Grédel Dick, with her hands clasped in prayer.

It seemed to me that all the others saw this apparition at the same time that I did, for I heard the old man groan out—

“O Lord God! Lord God! have mercy upon us!”

And the old woman gasped out—

“Sapheri is dead!”

She began to sob.

And the daughter cried out—

“Sapheri! Sapheri!”

And then everything disappeared, and Theodore Blitz, taking me by the arm, said—

“It is time to go.”

We left the house. The night was fine, and the wind murmured softly through the leaves.

As we hurried along the plane-tree avenue a melancholy voice at a distance seemed to sing from the river the old German ballad—

“The grave is deep and silent,
And horrible its bed;
It spreads its gloomy curtain,
It spreads its gloomy curtain,
O’er the country of the dead.”

“Ah!” cried Blitz, “if Grédel Dick had not been there we should have seen the other—the tall dark

one—take Sapheri down ; but she was praying for him. What is white remains still white.”

And the voice at a distance still more faintly continued—

“For never death re-echoes
The nightingale’s refrain.
The rose which blooms above the tomb,
The rose which blooms above the tomb,
Is but a rose of pain.”

Altogether, the horrible scene which had just passed before my eyes, and this distant melancholy voice, which, becoming more and more distant, at last was lost in space, have remained fixed in my memory like a confused image of infinity—of that infinity which swallows us all up without pity, and absorbs us irrevocably. Some, like Rothau, the engineer, pass it over with a laugh ; some, like the burgomaster, tremble before it ; others lament it in plaintive accents ; while, again, some, like Theodore Blitz, lean over the abyss and try to see the bottom. But it all comes to the same in the end, and there is nothing more true than the famous inscription on the Temple of Isis—

“I am what I am ; none have ever penetrated the mystery which surrounds me, none ever will penetrate it.”



H A N S W I E L A N D.





HANS WIELAND THE CABALIST.



I.



HANS WIELAND, our professor of metaphysics, was what the cabalists call an archetype, tall, thin, with a livid complexion, red hair, hooked nose, grey eyes, an ironical curl of the lips, surmounted by a Prussian moustache.

He used to surprise us all by the eccentricity of his displays in logic, by the links in his arguments, by his pungent satirical strokes, which were as natural to him as thorns on a bramble. Notwithstanding all university precedent, this original generally wore a high-crowned hat surmounted by a plume of cock's feathers, a frock trimmed with brandenbourgs, very wide trousers, and hussar boots, adorned with small silver spurs, which gave him a very martial appearance.

Now, one fine morning Master Hans, who liked me very much, and sometimes used to wink his eye in a

most grotesque way, and call me "the son of the blue god"—Master Hans, I say, came into my room, and said—

"Christian, I come to tell you you will have to find some other professor of metaphysics; I leave for Paris in an hour."

"For Paris! What are you going to do in Paris?"

"Argue, discuss, wrangle. I can't say exactly," said he, shrugging his shoulders.

"Then you may just as well remain here."

"No, great things are about to happen; and, besides, I have very good reasons for leaving."

Then going and peeping through the half-open door to assure himself that there was no one listening, he came and whispered in my ear—

"You must know I ran Major Krantz through the body this morning."

"You?"

"Yes. Only fancy, the fool had the impudence to insist yesterday before every one at Gambrinus's brewery that the soul is a mere affair of imagination. Of course I broke my glass over his head, and so we had a meeting this morning at a retired spot near the river, and there I supplied him with a first-rate materialist argument."

I looked at him aghast.

"And now you are off to Paris?" I replied, after a moment's silence.

"Yes. I received my quarter's salary three or four days since; this will be money enough for my journey. But I have not a minute to lose. You know the severity of the laws respecting duelling. The least that could happen to me would be to pass two or three years in

prison, and I must say I prefer taking myself out of the way."

Hans Wieland told me all this sitting at my study table and rolling a cigarette in his long thin fingers. He then gave me the details of his duel with Major Krantz, and ended by saying he had come to ask me to give him my passport, as he knew I had recently been in France.

"It is true," said he in conclusion, "that I may be some eight or ten years older than you, but we are both of us redhaired and lean. I need only cut off my moustache."

"Master Hans," replied I with some emotion, "I wish it was in my power to render you the service you ask, but it is impossible; it is contrary to my philosophical principles. My passport is in the drawer of my desk, next to Kant's *Pure Reason*. I will just go and take a turn under the acacias."

"Good, good," replied he, "I understand your scruples, Christian; they do you honour; but I do not share them. Shake hands; I will take it all on myself."

A few hours later in the day the whole town was astounded at hearing that Hans Wieland, the professor of metaphysics, had run Major Krantz through the body, and killed him on the spot.

The police immediately went in search of the murderer; they ransacked his modest little apartments in the Rue des Alouettes, but in vain. The major was buried with all the honours due to his rank, and for six weeks nothing else was talked about in the cafés and breweries, and then everything went on as before.

About fifteen months after this strange event, my worthy uncle Zacharias, the pro-rector, sent me to finish

my studies in Paris; he wished me to succeed some day to the high position he was then occupying himself, and he wished to spare no expense to make me what he called a luminary of science. So I set out for Paris at the end of October, 1831.

There is a quarter of Paris on the left bank of the Seine, between the Pantheon, the Val de Grâce, and the Jardin des Plantes, which may be called with truth solitary; the houses there are tall and ruinous, the streets are dirty, and the inhabitants ragged.

If it ever happens to you to lose yourself in this direction, people stop at the corners of the streets to look at you; some come and stand staring at you from their doors and windows. They look at you with curiosity, and this feeling on their part extends to your pockets. At the farther end of this quarter, in the Rue Copeau, there stands a narrow house inclosed by ancient walls, above which rise the branches of some centenarian elms. The house-door is low and arched, above it there is a lantern hanging from an iron rod, above the lantern are three windows gleaming through the darkness, above them three others, and so on up to a sixth floor.

Thither, to Madame Genti's, widow of a certain Genti formerly corporal in the Royal Guard, I caused my luggage to be carried, at the particular recommendation of M. Van den Bach, dean of the faculty, who remembered having occupied the same lodgings during the First Empire.

I shudder even now when I think of the dismal hours spent in that abominable hole, seated in the winter close to a small fire, which gave out much more smoke than heat, low in spirits, weak in health, and bored to death

by the said Madame Genti, who plundered me without remorse.

I shall always remember that after six months' fog, rain, mud, and snow, one morning when there was a little sunshine, after passing the gate of the Jardin des Plantes, I noticed the buds of the early leaves just bursting, I was so affected I was obliged to sit down, and I cried like a child.

I was two-and-twenty nevertheless, but I could not help calling the firs of the Schwartz-Wald to mind ; I could hear the cheerful voices of the girls singing—

“Na, si, ro, l'été vient encore une fois !”

And here was I in Paris. The sunshine had disappeared ; I felt so lonely, left all to myself in this immense town. My heart overflowed at last, I could control my feelings no longer ; that little glimpse of green had roused all my dormant affections. It is pleasant to weep and think of one's own distant home.

After a few moments' weakness I returned home full of new-born hopes, and I returned to my work with fresh courage ; a flood of youth and life had made my heart beat more quickly. I said to myself—“ If Uncle Zacharias could only see me now he would be proud of me.”

But I must in this place tell you of an occurrence at once both terrible and mysterious, the recollection of which awes me even now, and to this day upsets all my philosophical conclusions. Hundreds of times have I endeavoured to account for it to myself, but always unsuccessfully. Just opposite my window, on the other side of the street, was a piece of waste ground between

two lofty buildings, where quantities of weeds grew in unchecked luxuriance—thistles, nettles, briars, and mosses—all those which delighted in shady places.

Five or six plum-trees also grew untouched by the pruning-knife in this damp inclosure, which was closed towards the street by a wall of dry stones.

A notice painted on a board surmounted the ruined wall, with this inscription:—

“Land for Sale—425 mètres.

Apply to M. Tirago, Solicitor,

&c., &c.”

A rather crazy old barrel caught the water from the neighbouring gutter, and let it run over the grass. Millions of atoms, with their wings of gauze, gnats, and flies hovered about over the green slime; and when by chance a ray of sunlight penetrated between the roofs, life warmed there like a golden dust; two enormous frogs showed their great heads above the surface, dragging their string-like legs across the weeds, and swallowing thousands of insects at a time.

At the end of this sink of filth there presented itself a shed whose roof consisted of damp and rotten boards, on which a large tortoiseshell cat crept up and down, listening to the sparrows chirruping in the trees as it yawned, stretched itself, and unsheathed its claws with a melancholy air.

I had often contemplated this corner of the world with a sort of feeling of dread.

“Life swarms everywhere, life preys upon life,” said I to myself. “Whence, then, is the source of this inexhaustible flood of existence, from the atom fluttering in a sunbeam up to the star lost in the depths of infinity?”

What principle can we discover to explain this limitless, incessant, eternal, and boundless prodigality of the Great First Cause?"

And with my forehead buried between my hands I plunged into the abysses of the unknown world.

Now, about eleven, one evening in the month of June, dreaming after this fashion, leaning on the sill of my window, I fancied I saw an indistinct figure creep up to the wall, then a door open, and some one cross the briars and nettles in the direction of the shed.

All this occurred in the shadow cast by the adjoining buildings; perhaps my senses deceived me. But the next morning about five, on looking towards the same spot, I really saw a tall fellow come out from under the shed, and, crossing his arms on his breast, begin to scrutinise me in turn.

He was so tall, so thin, his clothes were so ragged, his hat so full of holes, that I had not the least doubt he was some criminal who had hidden himself there to escape the researches of the police, and who only left his den in the night to cut the throats of honest people.

You may well imagine, then, how astonished I was when the man, waving his hat, began shouting—

“Good day, Christian, good day!”

As I never returned his salutation, he crossed the inclosure, opened the door, and came into the empty street.

The only observation I made was that he had a large heavy stick in his hand, and I congratulated myself that I was so far removed from a tête-à-tête conversation with him.

How could that individual know me? and what could he want of me?

When he came opposite my window he raised his long thin arms, and cried in a most pathetic tone—

“Come down, Christian; come down and let me shake hands with you. Ah, do not keep me standing here in the street.”

You may believe I was in no hurry to respond to this invitation. Then he began to laugh, and showing his magnificent white teeth under his red moustache, he said—

“What! have you forgotten Hans Wieland, your old professor of metaphysics? Must I show you his passport to prove it?”

“Hans Wieland! can it be he? Hans Wieland with those hollow cheeks—those sunken eyes! Hans Wieland in rags?”

However, after examining him more closely, I recognised him; an irrepressible feeling of pity came over me.

“My dear old professor, can it be you?”

“The same; come down, Christian, and let me in; we can talk better in your room than in the street.”

I hesitated no longer; Madame Genti was not yet up. I unbolted the door, and Hans Wieland hugged me with delight.

“My dear master,” cried I, with my eyes full of tears, “what a state to find you in!”

“Bah!” replied he; “I am well enough in health, and that is the most important.”

“But come upstairs to my bedroom and let me give you a change of clothes.”

“Why? I think I am very well as I am; ha! ha!”

“But you must be hungry?”

“Not at all, Christian. I have lived for some time

on rabbits' heads and fowls' legs at Flicoteau's; it is a sort of nourishment imposed upon me by the god of famine. I have now passed through my apprenticeship; my wasted stomach is now only a myth; it requires sustenance no longer, knowing as it does that its demands will not be attended to. I eat no more; I smoke a pipe occasionally, that is all. Ellora's old fakir would envy me."

And as I looked dubiously at him—

"You seem surprised," he continued; "but you must know that to be initiated into the mysteries of Mithras imposes these trifling trials upon us before we can be endowed with any formidable power."

As he spoke he dragged me towards the entrance to the Jardin des Plantes. They had just unlocked the gate, and the sentry on duty, as he saw us come up to him, was so astonished at the physiognomy and dilapidated appearance of my poor tutor that for a moment he hesitated whether he ought not to refuse to allow us to enter; but Hans Wieland did not seem to be at all conscious of the effect his appearance produced, and walked quietly in.

There was as yet no one in the garden. As we passed by the cage where the serpents were confined, Hans pointed it out to me with his stick, and murmured—

"Pretty little creatures, Christian; I have always had a predilection for that description of reptile; they will not allow you to tread on their tails without biting."

Then turning to the right he led me into the labyrinth which leads to the cedar of Lebanon.

"Let us stop here," said I, "at the foot of this tree."

"No, let us go up to the look-out, we can see such a distance from it; I like to look at Paris and breathe the fresh air, and I often spend hours at the observatory—in fact, it is that which has kept me in the neighbourhood; you know, Christian, we all have our weak points."

We had by this time reached the glass dome, and Hans Wieland seated himself on one of the two great fossil stones which are imbedded in the rising ground. I remained standing opposite him.

"Well, Christian," he began again, "what are you doing now? You are attending the lectures at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, are you not? And are you as fond of metaphysics as you used to be?"

"Why, hardly."

"I thought so. I thought so. But how they are treated! One holds to forms and believes himself an idealist, for the beautiful, the ideal beautiful consists of form. Well, well, another talks of substance; to him substance is a primary idea. Do you understand that, Christian, substance and primary idea? They are fools indeed!

"The cleverest among them is not without some degree of merit; he has concocted a sort of system with bits taken here and there, just as you would make a harlequin's jacket; and the French, who think themselves very clever metaphysicians, have surnamed him the modern Plato."

And Hans Wieland, standing with his long grasshopper's legs wide apart, burst into a shout of laughter; then becoming suddenly calm again, he continued—

"Alas! my poor Christian! my poor friend! what have the great schools of Albert the Great, of Raymond

Lullius, of Roger Bacon, of Arnaud de Villeneuve, of Paracelsus become? What is the 'Microcosmos' now? Where are the three principles, the intellectual, the celestial, the elementary—where are they? The studies of Patrick Tricassius, Corlés, André Cornu, Goglenius, Jean de Hagen, Moldénates,* Savonarola, and of so many others? and the curious experiments of Glaser, Le Sage, and Le Vigourieux?"

"But, my dear master, they were only a set of poisoners," cried I.

"Poisoners! They are the greatest astrologers of modern times, the sole inheritors of the Kabbala! The real, the only poisoners are those quacks who teach but sophism and ignorance in their schools. Are you not aware that all the secrets of the Kabbala are beginning to find their application? The pressure of steam, the principle of electricity, chemical analysis, to whom are these wonderful discoveries to be attributed if not to astrologers? And our psychologists, our metaphysicians, what useful discoveries have they ever made, either applicable or true, to justify them in treating others as ignorant, and in attributing to themselves only the title of wise? Let us drop the subject—it stirs up my bile."

And his face, till now impassive, wore an expression of savage ferocity.

"You must leave Paris, Christian," said he abruptly; "you must go back to Tübingen."

"Why?"

"Because the hour of vengeance draws nigh."

"Whose vengeance?"

"Mine."

"And on whom do you seek to take vengeance?"

"On the whole world! Ah, they have turned me

into ridicule, they have despised Maha-Devi—they have looked upon me as a madman—a visionary—they had denied the blue god to worship the yellow god. Evil be to this race of sensualists!”

He rose from his seat, and gazed wistfully at the immense expanse of houses before him. His eyes glistened, and a smile lighted up his face.

A few boats were floating slowly down the Seine; the garden at his feet was green with foliage; carriers' waggons, trucks loaded with barrels of wine, carts full of vegetables, herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, droves of pigs were raising clouds of dust along the roads as far as the eye could reach. The city was humming like a beehive; a more magnificent sight I never beheld.

“Oh, Paris! ancient, sublime city that you are!” cried Wieland in bitter irony; “ideal, sentimental Paris! open wide your jaws; see liquids and solids approaching from every point in the horizon to keep up your animal spirits. Eat, drink, and sing, trouble not yourself about the future. Ah, France exhausts herself in order to support you.

“From morning until evening does this nation of wits labour to create a pleasant leisure for yourself. What is there wanting to fill up the measure of your enjoyments? She sends you her finest and most generous wines, her flocks, her earliest fruits and vegetables, her most beautiful daughters blooming with youth, the bravest of her young men, and all she asks in return is a revolution and a newspaper.

“Dearest Paris! Centre of light and civilisation, &c., &c., &c. Paris!—the promised land of paradox—the Philistines' Heavenly Jerusalem—Sodom of the intellect—capital in chief of sensuality and of the yellow

gods—be proud of your destiny. If you cough, the earth trembles; if you stir, the world shivers; if you but yawn, all Europe slumbers!

“What is mind compared to the incarnation of material force? Nought—you defy unseen influences—you mark them—but wait awhile—one of the sons of Maha-Devi and the goddess Kali is about to give you a lesson in metaphysics.”

And so Hans Wieland continued with increasing animation to give vent to his feelings. I had no doubt that want and privation had unsettled his brain. What could a poor devil without hearth or home do against the city of Paris?

After uttering these threats he became calmer, and noticing some of the idlers in the garden were beginning to ascend the labyrinth, he made me a sign to follow him, and we left the garden.

“Christian,” he began as we walked on, “I have a favour to ask you.”

“What?”

“You know now where I have set up my retreat. There I will tell you everything. But you must promise me on your honour to carry out my orders on every point.”

“I have no objection—but on one condition—that is——”

“You need not be uneasy—your conscience will have no objection to offer.”

“Then I promise you cheerfully.”

“Enough.”

We had by this time arrived at the door in the wall; he pushed it open, and we went in.

I cannot easily describe the sensation of disgust

which crept over me, when, after walking through the tall weeds of the den, I saw a quantity of bones heaped up in the shed.

I was about making a hasty retreat, but Hans Wieland was watching me.

"Sit down there," said he in an imperious tone, pointing as he spoke to a large stone between two of the posts supporting the roof.

I obeyed him.

He took a small clay pipe from his pocket, filled it with some to me unknown yellow substance and began to smoke slowly ; he then seated himself in front of me with his legs extended, and his long stick between his knees.

"Christian," he muttered, while a strange muscular contraction deepened the wrinkles in his cheeks, and curled his nostrils, "listen to me attentively, for it is absolutely necessary I should explain to you one of our mysteries that you may carry out my intentions."

He paused ; his eye grew dull, his brow contracted, and his lips closed so tightly that I could hardly see them.

"Yes," he began again in solemn accents—"yes, you must be made acquainted with one of the mysteries of Mithras. You see, Christian, one of the strangest circumstances in this world is that one half of the globe should be in full light while the other is shrouded in darkness. The consequence is that half of the animal world is asleep while the other remains awake. Now, Nature, which does nothing without a purpose—Nature, which simplifies everything, and so succeeds in obtaining infinite variety in absolute unity—Nature, having decided that every living thing should pass half its

time lulled to sleep, has also decided by the same process of reasoning that one soul suffices for two bodies. This soul, then, transported from one hemisphere to the other as quick as thought, develops two existences in turn. While the soul is at the antipodes the body sleeps; its faculties are wandering while matter takes its rest. When the soul returns to assume the command over its organs, then the body awakes. Matter is compelled to obey mind.

"I need say nothing further. Such an argument is not touched upon in your course of philosophical study, for it is an acknowledged fact that your professors are very learned without understanding anything; but that may explain to you how such strange ideas are often busy in your brain, may account for your strange dreams, your intuitive acquaintance with worlds you have never seen, and thousands of similar phenomena. What is commonly termed catalepsy, fainting fits, trances, magnetic clairvoyance—in short, all the phenomena attendant on sleep in all its forms—draw their origin from the same law. Have you understood me, Christian?"

"Certainly, assuredly. It is a sublime discovery."

"It is one of the least of the mysteries of Mithras," he continued with a grotesque smile; "it is the first step of initiation. But listen to the conclusion drawn from the principle as far as I am concerned. The soul which animates me belongs alike to one of the followers of the Maha-Devi, who live at the foot of Mount Abuji in the province of Sirshi, on the southern frontier of Joundpour; he is an Agori, or, if you like it better, an Aghorapanti, celebrated for his austerities, his murders, and his sanctity. He is, like me, an ini-

tiate of the third class. When he sleeps I am awake. Do you comprehend me?"

"Yes," replied I with a shudder.

"Well! now this is what I require at your hands. It is urgent that my soul should abide for two consecutive days at Deesa, in the cavern of the goddess Kali; such is my desire. Therefore must my body remain for that period inert. What I am now smoking is opium. My eyelids are growing heavy already. In a moment my soul will quit my body. Should I awake before the time fixed—you hear?—at that moment give me a fresh dose of opium. You have sworn it. Woe be on your head if——"

He could not finish his adjuration, but fell at once into a state of stupor. I laid him out with his head in the shade, and his feet among the nettles. His respiration, now fast, now slow and impeded, terrified me, and the mysterious communication just made to me by this man, the conviction that his soul had crossed boundless space in less than a second, inspired me with a sort of mysterious dread, as if an unknown world lay discovered before me. I felt myself grow pale, my fingers were restless, and trembled as if I had no control over them. The vital fluid penetrated the ends of my hair.

Besides which a midday's heat concentrated between these old buildings the fetid exhalations from the neighbouring bog, the croaking of the two frogs, which had just begun their dismal duet in the green slime, the hum of thousands of insects, and you can understand what gloomy ideas succeeded one another in my mind till evening.

Sometimes I looked at Wieland's pale face, covered

with moisture, and I cannot describe the terror which then seized me. I seemed to be an accomplice in some frightful crime, and in spite of my promises I shook the sleeper with all my strength, but his body remained either motionless or fell in another direction.

During these long hours it happened to me to meditate in my turn on these mysteries of Mithras. I said to myself that no doubt the first step of initiation would be the comprehension of animal life; the second, the essence and the functions of the soul—the third, God! But what man could have the audacity to seek, to taste uncreated might, or the pride to dare to explain it?

Time passed on as I sat thinking; it was only at the close of day when the church clock of Saint Etienne-du-Mont struck eight that I went home to take some hours' repose.

I had no doubt whatever that Hans Wieland's lethargic sleep would last tranquilly until the next day. In fact, the next morning about six, having gone to see him, I found him in the same attitude, and his respiration seemed to me to be easier.

Well, my friends, I can only tell you that day and the following night were passed in the same meditations and anxieties as the preceding.

At the close of the second day, about six in the evening, feeling worn out with fatigue and inanition, I hurried to Saint Benoit's to seek some refreshment. I remained at Master Ober's restaurant until seven.

On my return through the Rue Clovis I fancied some one was following me, but when I turned round I was surprised at seeing no one.

Though day was closing in, a most oppressive heat

oppressed the silent city ; not a door was open to catch the first cool air of evening ; not a soul was visible in the street ; no stir, no noise betrayed any signs of life in the vast quarter of the Jardin des Plantes.

Having quickened my steps I was soon at the door of the inclosure, which, as I pressed it with my hand, opened without noise ; and I was just moving through the grass towards the shed when Hans Wieland, paler than death, rushed to meet me, exclaiming—

“ Save yourself, Christian ; save yourself ! ”

I was pushed back into the street.

“ Come, come ! ” he continued, calling out ; “ hide yourself ! ”

Old Madame Genti hurried to the door of her house, screaming for help, thinking Wieland was going to rob me ; but he pushed her aside with his elbow, and hurrying into the passage with me, burst into a fit of diabolical laughter.

“ Ha ! ha ! the old woman—the old woman shall pay for you ; come upstairs, Christian—quick ; the monster is in the street already ; I feel it. ”

I rushed upstairs four at a time, as if the spectre of death was already behind me, and was extending its claws to seize me ; the door of my room flew open, and was closed upon us, while I fell into my armchair as if paralysed.

“ My God ! my God ! ” cried I, holding my hands crossed over my face, “ what is the matter ? How horrible all this is ! ”

“ The matter, ” replied Wieland coldly, “ is that I have just returned from afar ; I have accomplished six thousand leagues in two days, ha ! ha ! ha ! I come from the banks of the Ganges, Christian, and I bring

a charming fellow-traveller back with me. Listen, listen to what is going on in the street."

I listened, and heard a crowd of people coming down the Rue Copeau, and then a confused rumour.

At that moment my eyes met those of Hans: they were lighted up with an infernal expression of joy and satisfaction.

"It is the blue cholera," he whispered—"the dreaded blue cholera!"

Then with more animation he continued—

"From the tops of Mount Abuji, above the green-tufted palms, pomegranates, and tamarinds, at the bottom of the valley through which the Ganges flows, I saw it float slowly along, seated on a carcass, surrounded by vultures. I made a sign to it; it came. See, it has begun its work."

A sort of fascination compelled me to look into the street. A labouring man with naked shoulders was carrying a woman along, her head hanging down, and her legs dragging on the ground. As he passed beneath my window, followed by a crowd of people, I saw the poor creature's face was of a bluish tint. She was quite young, and had just been seized with cholera.

I turned round, shuddering from head to foot. Hans Wieland had disappeared.

That very day, without delaying to pack up my effects, and only taking the precaution to carry with me sufficient money for my journey, I ran to the office of the Messageries in the Rue Notre Dame des Victoires.

A diligence was about to start for Strasbourg. I got into it as a drowning man clings to a plank.

We set off.

People were laughing and singing in the streets; no one as yet knew anything of the arrival of cholera in France.

At every stage I leaned out of the window and inquired—

“Is the cholera here?”

And every one laughed at me.

“The poor fellow is crazy,” said my fellow-travellers. It was fearfully hot.

But when, three days later, I had the happiness of throwing myself into the arms of Uncle Zacharias, and half dead with terror I related all these strange occurrences to him, he listened gravely to what I said, and then replied—

“My dear Christian, you have done well to come home, very well indeed. Look at this newspaper—twelve hundred deaths already. It is a fearful thing!”



THE RAVEN'S REQUIEM.





THE RAVEN'S REQUIEM.



I.

MY uncle Zacharias was certainly the oddest original I ever saw in my life. Imagine to yourself a short, stout man, with a fresh colour, with a stomach like a wineskin, and rubicund nose—that is the portrait of my uncle Zacharias. The worthy was quite bald. He generally wore large round spectacles, and on his head a small black silk cap, which hardly covered the back of his head.

My dear uncle loved laughing; he also loved a tuffed turkey, pâté-de-foie-gras, and old Johannisberg, but music he preferred to everything. Zacharias Muller had been born a musician by the grace of God, as others are born French or Russian; he played on all instruments with a wonderful facility. His simple good-natured air would never lead one to suppose how much gaiety animation, and fancy such a personage could possess.

God created the nightingale greedy, curious, and melodious. My uncle was the nightingale. He was always invited to every wedding, to all parties, baptisms, and funerals. "Master Zacharias," they used to say, "we want a 'hopser,' an 'Alleluia,' or a requiem, for such and such a day." And he would simply reply, "You shall have it." Then he would sit down to work, and whistle at his music-stand, then smoke his pipe, while a shower of notes rained down on the paper as he beat time with his left foot.

Uncle Zacharias and I lived in an old house in the Rue des Minnesingers at Tübingen; he inhabited the ground floor—quite a repository of curiosities, encumbered with ancient furniture and old musical instruments—while I slept in a room upstairs, and all the rest of the house was uninhabited.

Doctor Hâselnoss lived just opposite to us. In the evening, when my room was dark and the doctor's windows were lighted up, by force of looking at them it seemed to me that his lamp was getting nearer and nearer, and at last touched my face. I could see the profile of Hâselnoss moving about at the same time on the wall in a strange sort of way, his pigtail bobbing about right and left, his rat's head covered with his cocked hat, his coat with wide skirts, and his slender body perched upon two skinny legs. I could distinguish two glass cases full of strange animals and glittering stones in the recesses of his apartment, and the backs of his books with gilt bindings, arranged on the shelves of his bookcase.

Next to my uncle, Doctor Hâselnoss was the greatest original in the town. Orchel, his housekeeper, boasted she only had a washing going on once every six

months, and I can willingly believe it, for the doctor's shirts were stained with yellow spots, which proved what a quantity of linen he had shut up in his clothes-press; but the greatest peculiarity in the character of Hâselnoß was that no cat or dog which had the mischance to cross his threshold ever was seen again. The Lord only knows what became of them. Public rumour even accused him of carrying a piece of bacon in one of the pockets of his coat, in order to attract the poor animals; but when he went out in the morning to visit his patients, and he trotted past my uncle's house, I could not help looking at his large pockets in the wide coat-skirts with a vague feeling of fear.

Such are the liveliest of my infantile impressions, but what charms me still in these distant souvenirs, which oftener than any other recur to my mind when I dream about dear Tübingen, is Hans, the raven, hovering about the streets, pilfering from the butchers' stalls, introducing himself into houses, stealing papers, and who was admired and petted by every one, who was continually calling out, "Hans, come here—Hans, go there!"

In truth he was a strange bird; one day he made his appearance in the town with a broken wing; Doctor Hâselnoß set it for him, and the whole population adopted him. One gave him meat, another cheese. Hans belonged to the whole place—he was under public protection.

I liked Hans very much, though he used to peck at me with his great beak. I seem to see him now, hopping about in the snow, throwing his head aside to look at you maliciously out of the corner of his black eye. If you let anything fall out of your pocket, a kreutzer, a

key, or what not, Hans would pounce upon it, and carry it off to the roof of the church. There it was he had his store, there he concealed the produce of his robberies; for Hans was unfortunately a thievish bird.

Now Uncle Zacharias could not bear Hans; he said the inhabitants of Tübingen were fools to attach themselves to such a creature, and this man, generally so quiet and gentle, used to break out into fury if by chance his eyes fell upon the raven flying about before our windows.

Now one fine October evening Uncle Zacharias seemed gayer than usual—he had not seen Hans all day. The windows were open, and the pleasant rays of the sun penetrated into the room; in the distance Autumn displayed her richest tints, which stood out gloriously against the dark green foliage of the firs. Uncle Zacharias was leaning back in his capacious armchair, and quietly smoking his pipe, while I watched him, and wondered what could make him smile, for his jolly red face was radiant with satisfaction.

“My dear Tobias,” said he, emitting a spiral column of smoke, “you cannot imagine what a sweet sensation of repose has just come over me. I have not felt myself so in tune to undertake some great work for many years, something in the style of Haydn’s *Creation*. The heavens seem to open before me, I can hear the angels and seraphim chanting their celestial hymn, I could even distinguish the different voices. What a grand composition, Tobias, a grand composition! If you could only hear the bass of the twelve apostles, it is magnificent—magnificent. Little Raphael’s soprano pierces the clouds; you might say it was the trumpet on

the day of judgment ; little angels are fluttering about, and the saints are weeping in the most harmonious manner. Hush ! now comes the *Veni Creator*—the colossal bass advances—the earth trembles—God is about to appear !”

And Master Zacharias bent his head, and seemed to listen with all his soul. “ Bene, Raphael, Bene,” he murmured. But while my uncle was thus plunged in ecstasy, and his face, his look, and his attitude expressed the most rapt attention, down comes Hans, and perches on our window-sill, giving utterance to a most lamentable “ couac.” I saw Uncle Zacharias grow pale ; he gave a look of terror at the window, his mouth was open, and his hand stretched out in an attitude of stupefied astonishment.

The raven, as I said before, had perched on the window-sill. I never saw such an expression of mockery before ; his great beak was turned a little on one side, and his eye was as bright as a pearl. He uttered another ironical “ couac,” and then began dressing his wing with his beak.

My uncle never said a word—he seemed petrified.

Hans took flight again, and Master Zacharias turned and looked at me for some seconds.

“ Did you recognise him ?” he began.

“ Who ?”

“ The devil, to be sure !”

“ The devil ! You are joking.”

But Uncle Zacharias did not condescend to answer me, and fell into a fit of deep thought.

It was night ; the sun had disappeared behind the firs of the Black Forest.

From that day forward Zacharias entirely lost all his

good spirits. He first tried to commit his grand symphony of the seraphim to paper, and failing in that, he became very melancholy; lay stretched in his arm-chair with his eyes turned up to the ceiling, and did nothing but dream about the celestial harmony of his imagination. When I represented to him that our money was running short, and that he had better compose a waltz or a "hopser," or something else to keep us going—

"A waltz! a 'hopser!'" cried he, "what can you be thinking about? If you were to talk to me about my grand symphony, well and good, but a waltz! Look here, Tobias, you have lost your head, you don't know what you are talking about."

Then he continued in a calmer tone—

"Believe me, Tobias, as soon as I shall have completed my grand work we can fold our arms and sleep as long as we like. It is the alpha and the omega of harmony. Our reputation will be made! I should have finished this chef-d'œuvre long ago but for one thing only which hinders me—that raven."

"The raven! But, my dear uncle, how can the raven prevent your writing? let me ask. Is it not a bird like all other birds?"

"Like all other birds?" muttered my indignant uncle. "I see, Tobias, you are in a conspiracy with the rest of my enemies; and yet what have I not done for you? Have I not brought you up as my own child? Have I not been a father and a mother to you? Have I not taught you to play the clarionet? Ah, Tobias, Tobias, it is very wrong of you!"

He spoke in such a tone of conviction that I ended by believing him, and in my heart I cursed Hans, who

was such an obstacle to my uncle's inspiration. "Were it not for him," said I to myself, "our fortune would be made!" And I began to doubt whether the raven was not the devil in person, as my uncle asserted.

Sometimes Zacharias tried to put pen to paper, but by a curious and almost incredible fatality Hans either showed himself at the critical moment or we could hear his hoarse cry. Then the poor man would throw down his pen in despair, and had he possessed any hair he would have torn it out by handfuls, his exasperation was so great. Things came to such a pitch that Master Zacharias borrowed the gun of Râzer, the baker, a rusty old tinder-box, and mounted guard behind the door, to watch for the accursed bird; but Hans, who was as cunning as the devil, ceased coming, and as soon as my uncle, who was shivering with cold, for it was in winter, went to warm his hands, Hans would come and croak just in front of the house. Master Zacharias would rush into the street. Hans was just out of sight.

It was quite a comedy; the whole town talked about it. My schoolfellows turned my uncle into ridicule, and consequently I had more than one fight in the square. I stood up for him stoutly, and I generally went home in the evening with a black eye or a swollen nose. Then he would look affectionately at me and say—

"Keep up your courage, my dear boy. In a little while you shall not have such a hard time of it."

And then he set to work to describe with enthusiasm the grand work he was meditating. It was really superb; it was all arranged: first the overture of the apostles, then the chorus of seraphim in a B and E

flat, then the Veni Creator, accompanied by thunder and lightning!

"But," added my uncle, "that raven must die. The raven is the cause of all the mischief, do you see, Tobias; were it not for him my grand symphony would have been finished long ago, and we should now be living on our property."

II.

ONE evening I was going home in the dusk, and in the little square I met Hans. It had been snowing; the moon was shining above the roofs of the houses, and a vague feeling of uneasiness came over me when I perceived the raven. When I reached our house I was very much surprised to find the door open; there was a gleam of light in the windows like the reflection of a fire nearly extinct. I went in and called out. No answer! But judge my astonishment when by the light of the fire I saw my uncle with his nose blue and his ears violet, stretched at full length in his arm-chair, our neighbour's old gun between his legs, and his shoes covered with snow.

The poor man had again been trying to shoot Hans. I called out—

"Uncle Zacharias, are you asleep?"

He half opened his eyes, and fixing a dull look on me, said—

"Tobias, I have aimed at him more than twenty times, but he always disappeared just as I was going to pull the trigger."

And then he relapsed into his state of torpor. It

was in vain that I shook him, I could not make him move. Then I became frightened, and ran across the street for Hâselnoss. As I raised the knocker my heart was beating fearfully, and as the blow sounded along the passage my knees bent under me. The street was empty, snow-flakes were falling all round me, and I shivered. At the third knock the doctor's window opened, and Hâselnoss put out his head, covered with a cotton nightcap.

"Who is there?" cried a shrill voice.

"Come as quick as you can to see Master Zacharias; he is very ill."

"I will put on my coat and come directly," replied Hâselnoss.

The window was closed. I waited there a long quarter of an hour looking up and down the deserted street, listening to the weathercocks creaking on their rusty pivots, and some distant farmyard dog baying the moon. At last I heard steps, and gently, gently, some one crept downstairs; a key was inserted in the lock, and Hâselnoss appeared on the threshold wrapped up in a grey cloak, with a small lantern in his hand.

"Prr!" he began, "how cold it is! I was right to wrap myself well up."

"Yes," replied I, "I have been shivering here for twenty minutes."

"I made haste, not to keep you waiting."

A minute later we were in my uncle's room.

"Good evening, Master Zacharias!" said the doctor as quietly as possible, while he blew out his lantern; "how do you find yourself? It seems you have a little cold in the head."

When he heard the doctor's voice Uncle Zacharias seemed to awake.

"Doctor," said he, "I will tell you the whole story from the beginning."

"It is not worth while," began Hâselnoss, sitting down opposite him on an old trunk; "I know all about it better than you; I know the principle and its consequences; the cause and its effects; you detest Hans, and Hans detests you. You run after him with a gun, and Hans comes and perches on your window-sill to laugh at you; ha! ha! it is very plain the raven does not like the song of the nightingale, and the nightingale cannot bear the raven's cry."

After this speech Hâselnoss helped himself to a pinch from his little snuff-box, then he crossed his legs, shook his shirt-frill, and began to smile, while he fixed his cunning little eyes on Zacharias.

My uncle was aghast.

"Listen," Hâselnoss went on; "what I have just said ought not to surprise you; every day the same thing occurs—our poor world is ruled by sympathies and antipathies. Go into a tavern or a brewery, no matter where, look at two men playing at cards; without being acquainted with either of them, you cannot help taking more interest in one than the other; what reason can you give for your preference? None; and on that fact philosophers construct systems farther than we can follow them, instead of saying at once—'Here is a cat, and there is a mouse; I feel for the mouse, because we belong to the same family; because, before I was Hâselnoss, doctor of medicine, I was a rat, a squirrel, or a dormouse, and consequently——' "

He did not finish his sentence, for at that moment

my uncle's cat chancing to pass close to him, the doctor seized him by the neck and made him disappear in his big pocket as quick as lightning. Uncle Zacharias and I looked at him in stupid amazement.

"What are you going to do with my cat?" my uncle began.

But Hâselnooss, instead of answering his question, smiled with an air of constraint, and muttered—

"Master Zacharias, I can cure you."

"In the first place give me my cat back."

"If," replied Hâselnooss, "you force me to restore your cat, I leave you to your fate; you shall not have a moment's peace, you shall be unable to write a note of music, and every day you shall grow thinner and thinner."

"But, in the name of Heaven!" cried my uncle, "what harm has the poor animal done to you?"

"What harm!" cried the doctor, whose features suddenly contracted—"what harm! Know we have been in a state of warfare for ages and ages; know that the cat contains in himself the quintessence of the thistle which choked me when a violet, of the holly which kept the sun from me when a bush, of the pike which swallowed me when a carp, and of the sparrowhawk which devoured me when I was a mouse!"

I thought Hâselnooss going mad; but my uncle closed his eyes, and after a long silence replied—

"I understand you, Doctor Hâselnooss, I understand you; maybe you are not far wrong! Cure me, then, and I surrender my cat."

The doctor's eyes sparkled.

"That is the way to put it," cried he; "now I shall set about curing you."

He took a penknife out of his instrument-case, and picked up a little bit of wood from the hearth, which he split in two with great dexterity, while my uncle and I watched him. After splitting the bit of wood he picked out the pith, then he took a very narrow strip of parchment out of his pocket-book, and having fitted it between the two slips of wood, he put it to his lips and smiled.

My uncle's face brightened up.

"Doctor Håselness," he exclaimed, "you are an uncommon man, a really superior man, a man——"

"I know it," interrupted Håselness, "I know it. But put out the light, and don't let there be a spark of fire to be seen."

While I carried his directions into execution he threw the window wide open. The night was bitterly cold. The calm and limpid moon shone above the roofs. The dazzling whiteness of the snow formed a strange contrast with the profound darkness of the room. I could distinguish the profiles of my uncle and Håselness at the window; many strange sensations at once had possession of me. Uncle Zacharias sneezed. Håselness raised his hand impatiently to enforce silence.

All at once a shrill whistle seemed to traverse the obscurity—"Pie-wite! pie-wite!" After this cry all was silent again. I could hear my heart beat. In another instant the same whistle was heard—"Pie-wite! pie-wite!" and I knew it was the doctor's call. This discovery gave me a little courage, and I paid closer attention than before to what was going on round me.

Uncle Zacharias, half stooping down, was looking at

the moon. Håselnooss stood perfectly still, one hand on the window and the other holding the call.

Perhaps two or three minutes might have elapsed, when I suddenly heard the clap of a bird's wings.

"Oh!" muttered Zacharias.

"Hush!" began Håselnooss, and the "pie-wite" was repeated several times in curiously modulated tones. The restless bird twice brushed past the window in his rapid flight. Uncle Zacharias made a motion to seize his gun, but Håselnooss took hold of his arm and murmured—"Are you mad?" Then my uncle checked himself, and the doctor skilfully repeated his cry, imitating the scream of the shrike when caught in a snare with such dexterity that Hans, who had been eddying about the house, at last flew into the room, no doubt attracted by the curiosity which seemed his ruling passion. I heard his claws fall on the board. Uncle Zacharias gave a shout and ran after the bird, which escaped from his hands.

"How awkward you are!" said Håselnooss as he shut the window.

All this time Hans was fluttering about the ceiling, and after making the circuit of the room five or six times he dashed against the glass with such force that he fell stunned on the ledge with his claws caught in the curtains. Håselnooss soon lighted a candle, and I saw poor Hans in my uncle's hands, who was squeezing his neck with all his might in a frenzy of enthusiasm, saying at the same time—

"I've got you at last! I've got you!"

Håselnooss laughed as loudly as my uncle.

"Ha! ha! you seem satisfied, Master Zacharias—satisfied at last; ha! ha!"

I never saw a more frightful scene. My uncle's face was crimson. The poor bird stretched out his legs, fluttered his wings like a great night-moth, while the death shiver ruffled his plumes.

This spectacle horrified me, and I ran to hide myself at the end of the room.

When my uncle's first emotions of gratified vengeance were over he became himself again.

"Tobias," said he, "the devil has had his due, and I forgive him. Hold that Hans up before my eyes that I may look at him. Ah! I feel I breathe again. Now silence, and listen."

And Master Zacharias, with inspiration on his face, gravely seated himself at his piano. I was standing opposite him, holding the bird by the beak. Behind him Hâselnoos was holding the candle, and it would not have been possible to see a more grotesque picture than that offered by Hans, Zacharias, and Hâselnoos under the sombre and wormeaten beams of the ceiling. I can see them still lighted up by the uncertain flickering of the candle as well as our furniture, the shadow of which quivered on the crazy walls.

At the first chords my uncle seemed transformed; his large blue eyes glistened with enthusiasm; he was no longer playing before us, but in a cathedral, before some immense assemblage in the presence of God Himself.

What a sublime song! in turns solemn, pathetic, harrowing, and resigned; then in the midst of sobs Hope displaying her wings of azure and gold. How is it possible to conceive such grand ideas?

It was a requiem, and for a whole hour my uncle Zacharias's inspiration never failed him.

Hâselnoss laughed no more; his face had insensibly put on a very strange expression. I thought he was affected, but I soon noticed him making a curious motion with his hands and squeezing them together, and I saw something was struggling in his coat-skirts.

When my uncle, exhausted by so much excitement, leaned his forehead on the edge of the piano, the doctor took the cat, which he had strangled, out of his pocket.

"Ha! ha!" he said, "good night, Master Zacharias, good night. We have each of us our prey, ha! ha! You have composed a requiem for Hans the raven, and now you may compose an Alleluia for your cat. Good night."

My uncle was so worn out that he merely nodded to the doctor, and motioned me to see him out.

Now that very night died the Grand Duke Yéripeter, second of the name, and as Hâselnoss was crossing the street I heard the cathedral bells slowly beginning to toll. When I returned to the room I found my uncle Zacharias standing up.

"Tobias," said he gravely, "go to bed, my child; I am quite well again. I must put all this to paper this night, lest I should forget it."

About nine next morning I was awakened by a great disturbance. The whole town was in a commotion, and they talked of nothing but the grand duke's death.

Master Zacharias was sent for to the castle.

They ordered him to compose Yéripeter's requiem, a work which was worth to him the post of band-master, which had long been the object of his ambition. So Uncle Zacharias became a great personage,

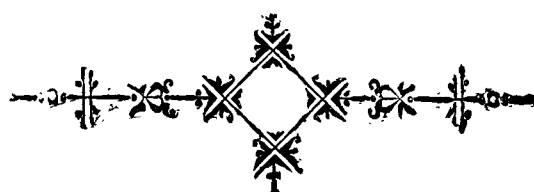
since he had a thousand dollars a year to spend, and he often used to whisper to me—

“ Ah, nephew, if they only knew it was for the raven that I composed my famous requiem, we might still be going about playing the clarinet at village fairs. Ah! ha!” and my uncle’s fat sides shook with satisfaction.

And so things happen in this world.



THE SONG OF THE TUN.





THE SONG OF THE TUN.



WAS sitting the other evening, between ten and eleven, in the tavern Des Escargots, at Nuremberg; I was quietly and contentedly watching the crowd moving about under the low beams of the public room, and all along the oaken tables, and I felt happy that I was in existence.

What a row of jolly faces! Some fat, some red, grave, gay, sneering, contented, lovelorn; some winking their eyes, some raising their elbows, gaping, snoring, fidgeting, sprawling their legs out, their hats on their ears, their cocked hats stuck on the backs of their heads. It was a sight worth looking at.

They were thundering out the hymn from the *Brigands*, "I am the king of these mountains." Their voices were all united in one vast harmony; even little Christian Schmidt, who was sitting on his father's knee, contributed his part of the soprano in a most satisfactory manner.

I nodded my head, I kept time with my foot, I hummed first one air and then another, and of course

I attributed the success of the music in a great measure to my own exertions.

I turned my eyes just then in the direction where Sébalt Brauer, the tavern-keeper, was sitting behind his counter. It was about the time when Brauer began to grow funny; his left cheek was puffed out, his right eye closed; he spoke in a whisper, and his cotton nightcap was pushed on to the back of his rusty old wig. Sébalt was looking at me too.

"Ha!" said he, lifting up his finger mysteriously, "do you hear, Theodore?"

"Hear what?"

"My Braunsberg singing, to be sure."

"Oh, you simpleton!" exclaimed I. "O man with a purely metaphysical mind, without the least practical sense! How can you suppose that your wine sings? If you were to say that the drunkards who have been swilling it sang, well and good. I could understand you then, but that wine—ha! ha! Really, Sébalt, your ideas are quite ridiculous, not to say illogical."

But Sébalt was not listening to me, he was passing from one table to another, with his leather apron tucked up round his waist, serving his customers, and spilling half the contents of his jugs over them, but calm and dignified.

Fat old Orchel took his place behind the counter with a sigh; the six lamps began to dance about the roof; when I had been for a quarter of an hour trying in vain to explain that extraordinary phenomenon, Brauer suddenly stumbled up against me, exclaiming, "Theodore, the barrel is empty; come down to the cellar and help me to fill it; you will see strange things there!"

I knew that Brauer owns the finest cellar in Nuremberg, next to that belonging to the grand duke, the cellar of the old Benedictine convent. So you may guess how readily I accepted his offer. Sébalt had already a lighted candle in his hand. We walked off arm-in-arm, our sabots resounding on the floor, waving our arms about, and shouting, with our heads up, "I am the king of these mountains!"

People about us laughed at us, and some said—

"Ah the rascals! the rascals! how pleased they seem!"

When we were in the Rue des Escargots we became quieter. The night was damp, the ruinous old houses seemed ready to fall on our heads; the misty moon let drop a silvery thread from her distaff, which wound along the zigzag course of the gutter, and at a distance I heard a cat beating his wife, who uttered the most plaintive cries.

"Brrr!" said Sébalt, shivering, "it's very cold."

At the same time he raised the heavy trap-door, which was fixed slantingwise against the narrow wall, and began to descend the stairs.

I followed him slowly; the stairs seemed as if we never should reach the bottom. Our shadows grew longer and longer behind us. I caught myself several times looking back in surprise. I noticed Brauer's enormous square-built frame, his brown neck, covered with short curly hair down to his shoulders, and a strange idea came into my head. I fancied I saw the Benedictines' butler before me, going to visit the convent library. I supposed myself to be one of that ancient brotherhood, and I passed my hand across my breast in search of a venerable beard. At the bottom of the stairs a niche

cut in the thickness of the wall vaguely recalled the statue of the Virgin to my mind, before which in olden times a light was burning constantly.

Very much impressed, and almost frightened as I was, I was about to impart my doubts on the subject to Schalt, when an enormous door, made of heart of oak, and covered with large flat-headed nails, stopped our farther progress. The tavern-keeper gave it a shove with all his strength, and exclaimed—

“Here we are, comrade!”

His voice rolled away through the subterranean darkness like distant thunder. I had the most curious sensations.

We went in gravely and seriously.

I have visited many celebrated cellars in the course of my life, from that of Yéris-Peter, our glorious ruler, to the cellars of the town-hall at Bremen, where the famous Rosenwein wine is kept, a bottle of which the burghers of the good free town used to send to Goethe every year on his birthday; I have seen larger cellars and richer in high-class wines, but truth compels me to acknowledge I have never seen any so clean and kept in such perfect order.

The casks were arranged in two parallel lines under an arch thirty feet high, and about a hundred yards long; they had a look of respectability which was very pleasant to see; behind every barrel a placard was hanging to the wall indicating the growth, the year, the day and month of the vintage, whether of the first or second pressing—in fact, all the titles of nobility which the generous juice, inclosed in those long iron-bound staves, was entitled to claim.

We walked along with slow and solemn steps.

"This is Braunsberg," said the tavern-keeper, holding up the light before a colossal cask. "This is my common wine. Listen how he is singing up there:—

"It is for me the miser piles
His golden crowns' reflected light;
It is for me the maiden smiles
In gloomy hut or parlour bright."

"Ah, the villain! how he turns up his ruddy moustache!"

So spoke Brauer, and we moved on.

"Halt!" he exclaimed, "here we are at 1822 Steinberg. Grand year!—taste that."

He put the light down, took from the tap a Bohemian open-lipped wine-glass, with a thin stem, and turned the cock. A golden thread filled the glass. Before handing it to me Brauer raised it gently to show its beautiful pale amber colour. Then he put it under his hooked nose.

"What a bouquet it has!" said he—"what perfume! This is pure imagination; it is the dream in the *Freischütz*."

I drank—every fibre in my brain seemed electrified. I was dazzled.

"Well?" said Sébalt.

In answer I began to hum "Intrepid hunter," &c. The distant echoes replied; they rose out of the obscurity and sang with me. It was magnificent.

"You did not sing just now," said Sébalt with a strange smile.

This made me reflect. I stopped short and exclaimed—

"Do you believe, then, that the wine sings?"

But he did not seem to pay any attention to my

words; he had become very serious. We continued our subterranean peregrinations. The old casks seemed to wait our coming with respect. Our looks became more animated. Brauer drank too.

"Ah, ha!" said he, "this is the opera of the *Magic Flute*. You must be a great friend of mine for me to play you an air of this. Yes, indeed—Johannisberg of the year '11."

An almost imperceptible thread seemed to whistle into the cup—the glass was full. I drank the very last drop, and meditated over it with respect. Brauer was watching my face with his hands crossed behind his back. He seemed to envy my good fortune.

As for me, the spirit of the old wine, more lively than our own, this spirit which inspired Mozart, Glück, Weber, and Theodore Hoffman, invaded my being, and made my hair stand on end.

"O inspiration divine!" cried I, "O enchanting music! No, never was mortal raised to the invisible spheres as high as I have been!"

I ogled the melodious cask from out the corner of my eye, but Brauer did not think fit to play me a second tune on it.

"Good," he began, "when one does commit an extravagance it is as well to do it for a man of real appreciation, a true artist. You are not like Kalb, our burgomaster, who wanted to tickle his throat with a second and even with a third glass, before he could venture to give an opinion upon it. The beast! I turned him out of the cellar!"

Then we passed in review Steinberg, Holtenheim, Hockheim, Markobrunner, Rudesheimer, all exquisite wines and generous, and, strangely enough, at every

fresh wine some different new air came into my head. I hummed it involuntarily, and Sébalt's idea became more intelligible. I comprehended he wanted to give me an experimental lesson on the greatest problem of modern times.

"Brauer," I said to him, "do you seriously believe that man is but the passive instrument of the bottle, a bugle for instance, or a flute, or a cornet-à-piston, merely a mouthpiece to the barrel, and whence it derives its music? What would become of liberty, moral law, individual and social reason, if this be true? We should be merely funnels, a sort of conscienceless and undignified machine. The Emperor Wenceslaus, the greatest drunkard ever known, would then have been the only one capable of comprehending what human destiny really is! Is he to be set above Solon or Lycurgus, or the seven wise men of Greece?"

"Not only do I believe it," replied Brauer, "but I am sure of it. Those idiots who are making that noise up above think they are singing of their own free will. Now, on the contrary, it is I who select here in my cellar the air which I like best; every cask, every barrel, has its own favourite air, one grave, another gay, another sad or melancholy. You shall judge for yourself, Theodore; for your sake I will sacrifice a small cask of Hockheim; it is a very delicate wine; the Braunsberg ought to be nearly gone, for they are making a fearful noise at the tavern. We will give them a sentimental turn."

So instead of filling his little barrel with Braunsberg he set it under the tap of Hockheim, then he very adroitly hoisted it up on his shoulders, and we left the cellar.

The tavern was in an uproar; the *Brigands'* hymn had degenerated scandalously.

"Oh!" cried Sébalt's wife, "how you have kept me waiting! Every bottle has been empty for the last quarter of an hour. Just listen to the noise—they will break everything."

We could hear the bottles rolled about upon the tables to the cry of "Wine, more wine!" The tavern-keeper set his barrel on the counter, and filled the bottles; his wife had hardly time to serve them, and the cries and yells were louder than ever.

I regained my seat and looked on at the riot which was going on, while I hummed the airs from the *Magic Flute*, the *Freischütz*, *Don Giovanni*, *Oberon*, and I know not how many operas, which I have either long since forgotten, or which I have never known. Youth, love, poetry, family happiness, hopes without limits, all grew young again in my heart; I laughed—in fact I was beside myself.

All at once a profound calm succeeded. The air from the *Brigands* ceased as if by enchantment; the fiddler's daughter, Julia Weber, began singing the sweet, tender air of the maiden from the opera of *Fredric Barbarossa*:—

"Maiden, on the plain so drear,
Whither so early—say?"

'I go the Sunday's mass to hear
At the village far away.

Hark! the bell calls me, like the lamb
Which bleats impatient round its dam.'"

The whole room listened to the young girl, observing a religious silence, and when she ceased all those great, coarse, fat faces began murmuring—

"Hark ! the bell calls me, like the lamb
Which bleats impatient round its dam."

It had quite a theatrical effect.

"Well," said Brauer, whispering in my ear, "what has been singing now?"

"The cask of Hockheim has been singing," I replied in a low tone, as I listened to the girl, who had begun to sing again some tender old-fashioned air of the good old times.


O noble slopes of the Gironde, illustrious vineyards of Burgundy, of the Rhingau—and you, too, fiery vines of Spain and Italy, Madeira, Marsala, Port, Sherry, Lagrima-Christi, and you also, Tokay, generous Hungarian, I know your merits now—you are the spirit of past times, of extinct generations ! I wish you well with all my heart ! May you flourish and prosper for all time ! And you, kind captives in your bonds of ash and iron, you are impatiently waiting the happy moment of passing into our veins, of causing our hearts to beat, of living again in us ! Well, you will not wait long. I swear to deliver you, and let you sing and laugh as long as the Creator of all beings entrusts me with this noble mission ! But when I am no longer here—when my bones have grown green as knotty vine-stems on the hill-side—when my blood boils in crimson drops in the ripened grape, and pours forth from the wine-press in limpid streams, then, young men, your turn it becomes to deliver me then. Let me revive in you, be your strength, your joy, your courage, as your ancestors are mine to-day. That is all I ask of you, and by so doing we shall all, each in his turn, fulfil the sublime precept—Love one another for ever and ever. Amen.



CITIZEN SCHNEIDER.



CITIZEN SCHNEIDER.

“OW comes it that the recollections of our childhood are so deeply rooted?” said Friederich the sculptor, lighting his pipe with a melancholy air. “When we can scarcely remember the events which happened last month, how comes it that the scenes of our youth are engraved, as it were, on our memory, so that we can fancy sometimes that we are still living in the midst of them? I shall never forget, for instance, my father’s humble cabin, with its thatched roof, its little low living-room, the wooden staircase at the back, which led up to the attic, the bed with its grey serge curtains, and the two small windows with leaded panes, which looked out on the mountain pass of the Schloucht, near Munster. These things I never can forget, nor the most insignificant events of these days either. Everything seems vividly impressed on my memory, but especially the winter of 1785.

During this winter, Grandfather Yeri, with his great

frizzy woollen cap pulled down over his ears, slept from morning till night in the old easy-chair, beside the hearth. My mother plied her spinning-wheel, and my father carved heads for walking-sticks out of holly. The shavings fell thick beside him on the ground as he worked, curling themselves into what seemed to me like snail-shells. Sometimes he stopped to rest, struck a light with the flint and steel, and, pressing the lighted tinder on his pipe, cried out—

“It’s getting on, Catherine, it’s getting on.”

Then, seeing me sitting on my little stool, deeply attentive to what was going on—for I liked nothing so well as to watch him at work—he smiled at me and resumed his task.

The snow rose higher and higher every day about our cabin. Already the old tottering walls were hidden from view. It was only through the upper panes of the windows that we could catch a glimpse of the sky; the others were of a dull, dead white.

Sometimes I climbed up in a chair, and gazed out at the clouds, sweeping in ever-changing shapes over the immense valley below, the rocky summit of the Heneck rising into the heavens, and lower down the dark pine-trees clothed with a silvery mantle of hoar frost. There was not a sign of life anywhere. The look of the landscape, with its thick carpet of snow, gave you a shuddering sense of cold, and yet, inside, the fire blazed brightly on the hearth, diffusing a pleasant warmth around. The little dilapidated door, which communicated with the stables, allowed us to hear the bleating of our goat, and the deep lowing of our cow, Waldine. It was a pleasure to hear them in the cold and desolation of such a winter. We felt that at least we were

not alone amidst the snows; we were in the company of God's creatures. Although dumb animals, they were still friends.

I shall never forget one morning that Waldine, who was no doubt tired of being kept so long in the dark, succeeded in slipping her head out of the stakes, in some way or other, and came in to pay us a visit. She walked into the room without the least embarrassment, and my father, seeing her, burst into a hearty laugh.

"Hallo! Good morning, Waldine," cried he. "You came in without ever thinking of taking off your hat, he! he! he! Leave her alone, Catherine, leave her alone; she'll not do any harm. Give her time to look about her and get a breath of fresh air."

Then I was commissioned to take her back to the stable, and make her fast to the rack.

So the time went on. Whilst day by day the birds dropped dead from cold and hunger, and the wild beasts took refuge in the caverns of the Heneck and the Val-tin, we, gathering close around the hearth, passed our days in a sort of dreamy repose, and every evening my mother used to say—

"Another day over! Another day nearer spring!"

All this that I have described I remember with delight, but there are strange and painful events sometimes happening in this world, which come up before you long afterwards, and show that the wisdom of men, and even their kindness, is often nothing but folly.

That year, then, on the last day of January, between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, a high wind rose. Although the house was sheltered from the north, it trembled at every blast; but in the course of an hour it was so covered with snow that the storm passed

completely over it. We had put out the fire, and the only light in the house was from a lamp which we placed on the table. My mother was praying, and I think my father was also. Grandfather had waked up, and seemed frightened at the noise. All the snow which had fallen for the last three months was whirling upwards to the sky in clouds; the howling, and whistling, and moaning of the storm outside was terrific; every second or two we heard the crash of some gigantic tree torn up from its roots. If the wind had been in the front of the house it would have dashed in our windows and stripped off the roof in a twinkling; fortunately, it blew from the mountain behind.

In the midst of this frightful noise, we fancied sometimes we could distinguish the cries of human beings, and although so much alarmed for our own safety, we could not help shuddering at the thought of fellow-creatures being exposed to the fury of such a tempest. Every time these sounds reached our ears, mother repeated—

“There is some one out in the storm.”

And we listened with beating hearts, but the grand voice of the tempest drowned everything else.

This lasted for two hours. Then there came a deep silence, and we heard our goat bleating again in the stable.

“The wind is down,” said my father; and, approaching the door, he listened for a few moments, with his finger on the latch.

We were all close behind him when he opened it, and we gazed out with eager eyes. The sky was very dark, on account of the snow which was still falling. A weith

spot on our right showed the position of the sun. It might then have been about four o'clock.

As we were looking steadfastly through the thick flakes we perceived, about two or three hundred yards below us, on the path leading down from the Schloucht, a sleigh buried in the snow, with a horse attached to it. Nothing was visible but the horse's head and the raised points of the runners of the sleigh.

"That must have been what we heard," exclaimed Grandfather Yeri.

"Yes," said my father, coming back into the cabin; "an accident has happened."

He took the wooden shovel from behind the door, and began to descend the hill, plunging into the snow up to his knees at every step. I ran close behind him, unheeding my mother's cries; and grandfather followed too, at a greater distance.

The farther we went down the deeper grew the snow. Notwithstanding that, my father, having reached the top of the sloping bank which bordered the road, slid down it, supporting himself by the handle of the shovel, while I remained above looking on at the proceedings.

He caught the horse by the bridle, to lead him forward, but immediately perceiving some object lying a few yards off in the snow he went up to it, and found it was the body of a stout middle-aged man, dressed in black. He lifted him up with a good deal of difficulty, his head falling heavily on his shoulder, and laid him in the sleigh; then, by dint of shouting and pulling, he succeeded in getting the animal extricated from the hole into which he had fallen. It was a terrible affair to get the sleigh up to our house, but my father managed it by carefully making a circuit round the

rocks and roots of trees, where the snow lay the deepest.

Grandfather and I followed close behind, feeling very sad, and gazing at the unfortunate man lying stretched on the sleigh. He had on a cassock, and wore black silk stockings, and silver buckles in his shoes. He was evidently a priest.

You may imagine the distress of my mother on seeing this holy man in such a pitiable plight. I fancy I can still hear her crying, with her hands clasped above her head, "Lord have mercy upon us!" She wanted to send my father off at once to Munster to fetch a doctor. But in the meantime night had come on. It was as dark as pitch outside, and all the goodwill in the world won't enable you to find your way through the snow under such circumstances.

In this sad state of affairs all we could do was to light the fire as fast as possible, to warm blankets and other wraps; and as, during these operations, I was in every one's way, I was sent off to bed in grandfather's room.

All night I heard the noise of people coming and going in the room below, I could see the light shining through the chinks in the floor, and heard my mother crying and lamenting. At last, towards one o'clock, worn out with fatigue and an empty stomach, I fell asleep, and slept so soundly that they had to awake me at eight o'clock the following morning, otherwise I dare say I should be sleeping still.

"Friederich! Friederich!" cried grandfather, raising the trap-door with his bald head; "Friederich, come down, my child; the soup is ready!"

At the sound of this well-known voice I awoke and

looked round. It was broad daylight, and the delicious smell of the potato soup filled the whole house.

I barely took time to slip on my little grey liner-rousers and my sabots before going down. All the events of the evening before were vividly present to my mind, and, besides being very hungry, I was curious to know what was going on. So, while still at the top of the stairs, I leaned over the banisters and looked down eagerly into the room below. The soup-tureen was smoking on a nice white tablecloth; grandfather, who was sitting opposite, was making the sign of the cross; father and mother were repeating the *Benedicite* most devoutly, standing; and the fat man, seated in a leather-covered arm-chair beside the hearth, with his legs wrapped in a woollen coverlet and his hands crossed over his rounded paunch, which reminded one of the shape of a bagpipe, looked for all the world, with his fleshy face and red hair, like a cat sleeping on the warm wood-ashes. It was touching to behold him.

"Come down, Friederich," said my mother; "don't be afraid. His reverence the curé will not harm you."

The stout man turned his head round, and said with a smile—

"This is your little boy?"

"Yes, your reverence."

"Come this way, my little lad," said he.

My mother took me by the hand and led me up to the good priest, who looked at me with a softened expression in his great grey eyes. Then he tapped me on the cheek, and asked—

"Does he know his prayers yet?"

"Oh, yes, your reverence. It was the first thing we taught him."

“That’s right! that’s right!”

My mother had taken off my cap, and with my hands clasped and my eyes fixed on the ground, I repeated the *Ave Maria* and *Pater Noster* without drawing breath.

“Very good, very good indeed,” said the stout man, pinching my ear; “he! he! he! You will one day be a good servant before the Lord. Go now, and take your breakfast; I am pleased with you.”

He spoke so gently that the whole family thought—

“What a good man! What a kind heart he has! What a sad thing if he had been frozen to death in the Schloucht!”

But a circumstance happened which showed us this good man in quite a different light. You must know that my father, the evening before, had carried his reverence the curé’s baggage, consisting of his portmanteau, his three-cornered hat, and a thick roll of paper, into the house, and placed them on a great chest on the other side of the hearth, the portmanteau below, the three-cornered hat above, and the roll of papers lying on the top of the hat.

In passing round the table I happened to touch the roll of papers, which fell on the floor and scattered all about the hearth.

Then this quiet, peaceful man uttered a cry like that of a famished wolf, accompanied with a whole volley of frightful oaths. He threw himself on the papers, snatched them from the flames, and began to extinguish them with his hands. Then he looked at me, standing there pale and condemned, with such a ferocious air that I felt my flesh creep. We were all the picture of consternation, and gazed at him with open mouths.

He, examining his papers, which were a little scorched at the edges, began to stammer out angrily, "My Thucydides!—the little wretch—he nearly burned my Thucydides!" After which, rolling his papers up together, and perceiving our air of dismay and surprise, he shook his finger at me with an attempt to resume his former good-natured manner. But we were no longer in a humour to enjoy his jocularities.

"Ah! you little rascal," said he, "you gave me a sad fright just now. Only imagine, I have come expressly from Cologne about these papers. Yes, I have travelled more than three hundred miles to search for these old manuscripts in the convent of Saint Dié. It took me three months to put them into some sort of order, and here was the carelessness of this unfortunate child on the point of annihilating a work which is, perhaps, the only one of the kind in the world. I'm all in a perspiration with fright."

It was quite true: his broad fat face was purple with agitation, and the great drops of sweat were standing on his forehead.

Notwithstanding that, you may easily imagine that we all looked very grave. We were not accustomed to hear priests swearing like a pack of cattle-drivers. My mother did not say a word. We ate our breakfast in silence. When we had finished, father went out. We heard him leading the horse from the stable and harnessing him to the sleigh in front of the door. Then he came in again, and said—

"Your reverence, if you will take your seat in the sleigh, we shall be in Munster in an hour."

"I am quite ready," said the fat man, rising. And, looking round the room with a serious air, he added,

"You are good worthy people; forget my momentary hastiness. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Permit me to testify my gratitude towards you."

He attempted to slip a gold frederick into my mother's hand, but she refused, saying—

"It was in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that we gave assistance in time of distress, your reverence. If we had been in need, you would have done the same for us."

"No doubt, no doubt," said he; "but that shouldn't prevent me from——"

"Oh no! do not deprive us of the merit of doing a good deed."

"Amen!" said he abruptly.

He took the roll of papers from the chest, put on his three-cornered hat, and went out.

My father had already carried the portmanteau out to the sleigh, and had taken his seat on the bench in front. The curé got in behind, and we stood watching them as they drove off in the direction of the Hollow Rocks. We all felt thoughtful and serious. Grandfather frequently gave a silent look at my mother. A crowd of ideas were passing through our minds, but none of us said anything.

In the evening, about four o'clock, my father returned. He said that he had driven the Cologne clergyman to the house of his reverence the Curé of Munster, and that was all.

That year the spring came on at the usual time. After five long months of winter, the sun's heat grew strong enough to melt the snows and dry the damp floors of our cabin. We put the cow and goat into the paddock, cleaned out the stable, and let in fresh

air. Very soon I was driving the beasts to the pastures again, cracking my whip, and making the mountains echo with my joyous shouts. The hill-sides were once more covered with bloom, and the great storm was forgotten.

II.

SEVERAL years passed away, Grandfather Yeri died, and my father sent me to Lower Alsace to serve my apprenticeship as a sculptor to my uncle Conrad, at Vettenheim. I was now nearly fifteen years of age, and began to think myself a man. It was at the time when every one wore the red cap and tricoloured cockade, and men were setting out every day in hundreds, in grey linen trousers and with a musket on their shoulder.

I remember that at this time two regiments were being formed in Strasbourg, and they had to get children to beat the charge, as all the men insisted on carrying a musket. Five boys presented themselves for this purpose at Vettenheim, of whom I was one. We drew lots who should go. It was a neighbour of ours, little Fritz, on whom the lot fell, and the whole village cried out that he was in luck. Now-a-days people think themselves lucky when they are left behind.

It was at this time, too, that the Abbé Schneider was exterminating all the curés, monks, and canons in Alsace. Henceforward nothing was to be worshipped but the Goddess of Reason and the Graces.

One morning I was busily engaged dressing a piece

of freestone in our workshop, which looked into the little square with the fountain in the centre. Uncle Conrad was standing at the door smoking his pipe, and Aunt Gredel was sweeping the chips of stone into the passage.

It might have been about ten o'clock when we heard a great noise outside. Men were running past in front of the house, others were crossing the square, and others, again, were following the crowd, asking—

“What’s all this about? What has happened?”

Naturally I dropped my work to see what was going on; but I had only got as far as the passage when the trot of a large body of horse was heard in the distance, together with the clash of sabres and the heavy roll of a large waggon, and then the blast of a trumpet echoed through the village.

The next moment a squadron of hussars wheeled into the square, those in front with cocked pistols held aloft, and the others with their naked sabres in their hands. Behind them, on a black horse, rode a stout man, dressed in a blue coat, with broad lapels thrown back on the chest, an immense cocked hat, with tri-coloured feathers, worn across the head, a scarf round his middle, and a cavalry sabre dangling against his boot. Then came, jolting heavily over the pavement, a great cart or waggon drawn by grey horses, and piled with red-coloured beams of wood.

The fat man with the tri-coloured plume was laughing, whilst the people, as pale as death, shrank up against the walls, their mouths wide open, and their arms hanging down. At the first glance I saw that it was the priest whom we had saved from the snow!

A few hypocritical mountebanks in the crowd, in

order to seem as if they had no cause for fear, were shouting, "Here comes Citizen Schneider to sweep the caterpillars out of Vettenheim and the neighbourhood! Let the aristocrats look out!" Others were singing, with all sorts of contortions, "The aristocrats to the lantern! the lantern! the lantern!"

They kept moving their arms and legs up and down in time to the music, but that did not prevent their hearts from being in their shoes, like every one else, and the laugh from being on the wrong side of the mouth.

When opposite the fountain the procession stopped. Schneider, cocking his nose up in the air, gave a look round the square—at the lofty roofs with their peaked gables, the windows and skylights crammed with anxious faces, and the little niched recesses, from which the figures of the Virgin had been carefully removed.

"What a nest of vermin!" cried he to the captain of hussars. "What a vile nest of vermin! We shall have work here for the next eight days."

Hearing that, Uncle Conrad took me by the arm, saying—

"Come in, Friederich, come in! They'll pick us out at the first look! It's terrible!"

He was trembling in his limbs, whilst I felt a cold shiver run down my back.

As we were entering the workshop I saw Aunt Gredel on her knees praying out loud, with her hands clasped. I had but just time to push her into the kitchen and shut the door. She might have sent us all to the guillotine with her devotion.

Then uncle and I looked out through the little window-panes. The crowd outside were still singing—

"*Ca ira!* The aristocrats to the lantern! the lantern!" like the grasshoppers, that chirp away unheeding the coming winter, which will shrivel them up in a moment with its frosty breath.

A crowd of people were standing in front of our windows; but we could see, over their shoulders, the hussars drawn up in the square, with Citizen Schneider and the great cart in the centre, near the fountain. Two strapping fellows, with honest, good-humoured faces, were taking the beams off the cart, and, after a little, Roemer, the innkeeper, came out with a bottle of brandy and handed it to them. A little withered-looking man, as pale and feeble as a tallow rushlight, with a long sharp nose and a face like the blade of a razor, and dressed in a short red blouse strapped in tight about the waist, was superintending the work. He looked for all the world like a figure of Punch, but God preserve us from such Punches!—it was the executioner!

Whilst we were still looking at the proceedings I have described, Rebstock, the mayor, an honest vine-grower, grave and broad-shouldered, with an immense three-cornered hat coming half-way down his back, advanced across the square.

Every tridi and sextidi (third and sixth day) Rebstock collected the village children together, and taught them the republican catechism. He was a shrewd, sensible fellow, and as he expected a visit from Citizen Schneider, he had taken the precaution of having a coat made out of a priest's vestments in order to propitiate the scoundrel.

As he was approaching, Schneider leaned over his horse's neck and cried out—

"Here is the wine-press ready, but where are the grapes?"

"What grapes, Citizen Schneider?"

"The aristocrats."

"There are none here; we are all good patriots."

On hearing this, the expression of Schneider's face was fearful to behold: I fancied I saw him once more snatching the roll of papers from the fire.

"You lie!" shouted he; "you are one yourself! What is the meaning of that gold and silver on your clothes when the Republic has not wherewithal to nourish her children?"

"This, Citizen Schneider, that I am wearing is the priestly vestment. I put it on my back in order to exterminate the hydra of superstition."

Then Schneider burst into a loud laugh, exclaiming—

"Well done! I like that! But come, bethink yourself; I'm sure you must know of some aristocrats about here!"

"No, I assure you. They have all made their escape. Our lads are going to look for them at Coblenz, and our very children are beating the 'charge.'"

"We shall see that," said Schneider; "you look to me to be a true-hearted patriot. Your idea of the vestments pleases me highly. We shall dine with you. It's capital! ha! ha! ha!"

He held his great paunch with both hands.

All the hussars dined with the mayor in company with Schneider. They made a requisition in the village, and every one sent the best he had.

The following day Schneider paid a visit to the club, and heard the children recite the "Rights of Man" in chorus.

Everything we thought would have passed off quietly. Unfortunately, a man who had once been a bell-ringer in the church, and on that account fancied himself an aristocrat, had hid himself in the hayloft of the Golden Lion, and the hussars, when looking for a truss or two of hay, ferreted him out, and wanted to know why the poor devil had concealed himself.

Schneider on inquiry found out that he had rung the church bells, and had him guillotined while they were sitting at dinner. This was a great vexation to Rebstock, but he daren't say anything for fear of being guillotined himself.

Schneider went away the same day, to the great satisfaction of the whole village.

That was the way I made the acquaintance of the good apostle again, and I have often thought since that if my father had known what was to happen, he would have left him to perish in the Schloucht.

As for the old Mayor of Vettenheim, people never forgave him for having made a coat out of a priest's vestments, and the old women especially, whom he had saved from being guillotined by this means, showered down maledictions on his head, which was certainly very unjust. One day when I was talking to him amongst his vines about this affair, he smiled sadly and said—

“If I had allowed Schneider to cut their heads off, they would now be in the trough of the guillotine, in spite of vestments and everything else. Nor would I have had any special cause to reproach myself; I should only have acted as basely as every one else.”

Then I thought to myself—

“This poor old Rebstock is right. Save people from

death, and, ten to one, the half of them will load you with curses, and the other half send you to the guillotine! Not very encouraging truly! If men did not do these good deeds from a spirit of Christian charity they would be the greatest fools in existence. It's sad to say it, but it's the truth!"





THE CLARINET PLAYER.



CONFESSIONS OF A CLARIONET PLAYER.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN my uncle Stavolo purchased his fifteenth arpent of vines at the sale of the effects of old Hans Aden Fischer, in the year of grace 1840, and paid a thousand crowns hard cash for it to Bischof the notary, the whole village of Eckerswir was filled with surprise and admiration. Several people proposed to confer the highest civic honours on him, to appoint him burgomaster, or member of the municipal council; but others, more judicious, maintained that the place of sworn taster would be more in his line, seeing there was not in the whole country side a better judge of wines than Uncle Stavolo. He himself, however, attached but little value to these distinctions, and modestly replied—

“Leave me alone with your situations of burgomaster and municipal councillor. Thank goodness, I am now

free from all anxiety about my private affairs, and do you imagine that, at the age of fifty-three, I am going to get myself into a pack of troubles about public matters? No, no, put that out of your head. The place of sworn taster would answer me better, for it's always pleasant enough to drink a glass or two of good wine that costs you nothing; but thank Heaven my cellars are tolerably well filled with Rikevir and Kütterlé, and with Drahenfeltz of all qualities, so that I have no need to pick up alms, as it were, right and left, and poke my nose into my neighbours' wine-vats. Do you know what I intend to do from this time forward? I have no idea of walking up and down with my hands behind my back, as you may well imagine. I mean to cultivate my vines carefully and well; I intend to replace the old plants which have ceased to bear with young healthy ones, and those which are of indifferent quality with better, as far as I am able. I shall take a walk out on the hill-side every morning with my spade in my hand, and if I see any hurtful weeds growing I shall root them out; I shall tie up any branches that have got loose to their stakes—in short, I shan't want for occupation. Then I shall return home quietly and sit down to table with my daughter Margredel and my nephew Kasper; after supper we shall have a cheerful glass together, and Kasper will play us an air or two on the clarionet. In vintage time I shall sulphur my wine-casks and look after the vats—in short, in place of meddling with what doesn't concern me I shall attend to my own business. It isn't enough, my dear friends, to make money; you must also know how to keep it. How many people, in their anxiety to acquire honour and glory, have ended by leaving themselves without a farthing!

Oh no, my dear friends ; you intended to pay me a compliment, I know, but you took the wrong way. My proper place is not in the municipal council, but amongst my vines. I wish to be nothing more than plain Conrad Stavolo, and that I am already, by the grace of God."

Thus spoke my uncle, and every one saw that he was in the right.

Now all this plan of life that he had chalked out for himself he followed exactly, and not only did he cultivate and tend his own vines, but he put mine also in good order.

Ever since my mother's death I had lived with my uncle Conrad as one of the family, and, to explain matters to you exactly as they stood, I was in love with my cousin Margredel, and thought there was nothing in the whole world to compare with her flaxen hair, rosy, dimpled cheeks, and large blue eyes. Her little head-dress of black taffetas, her bodice with gold and silver spangles, her red skirt edged with velvet—in short, everything she wore seemed to me to become her so wonderfully that I often said to myself, "In the whole country round, from Munster to St. Hippolyte, there's not as handsome, as well made, as merry and good-natured a girl, as cousin Margredel."

Margredel, on her side, seemed to look upon me with an eye of favour ; at all the village fêtes she danced with no one else. We used to set off in the mornings in the waggon, seated on two bundles of straw, Fox and Rappel trotting away in front, Uncle Conrad driving, and all along the road we did nothing but talk and laugh. Even to this day, when I think of these little journeys, of our arrival at the Golden Pitcher, in the market-square of Hunevir, and of our

merry dances, it seems as if I was all at once transported to some happier sphere. Uncle Conrad was well aware that I loved Margredel, but he thought we were too young to get married as yet.

"Kasper," said he to me sometimes, "try and earn a little money by your music; go the round of the village—don't miss a single fête. I am told that you are the best clarionet in all Alsace; that Waldhorn, with his cornet, and you, are equal to a whole orchestra. It was Father Niklausse that told me that, and I fully agree with him. Well, when you have gathered up the wherewithal to buy two arpents of vines, my boy, I shall tell you something that will please you."

And as he said this he looked at Margredel, who blushed and cast down her eyes, whilst I felt as if my heart would jump out of my breast.

You could scarcely believe how I loved Margredel. Often when I am alone, and dreaming with my eyes wide open, I fancy I am once more climbing the street of the village in those happy days. In imagination I see Uncle Conrad's house, about half-way up the ascent, with its steep-roofed gable, notched like the teeth of a saw, standing out against the vine-covered hill behind. I see the little opening under the roof, where the pigeons are flying in and out, and turning somersaults in the air, or strutting about on the ledge outside, cooing and puffing out their breasts; I see the two little windows of Margredel's sleeping chamber below, with their neat glazed earthenware pots of pinks and mignonette; I see Margredel herself stationed there watching for my approach, without moving. She fancied that I did not see her, but I did see her, and I felt as happy as a king. I grasped my clarionet tighter,

I drew myself up, buttoned my coat tightly, tossed my hair back from my forehead, and walked briskly forward, that she might think within herself, "Cousin Kasper is by far the handsomest young man in the village."

And when I ran up the steps, casting a look, as I passed, into the sitting-room, I saw her already busy laying the cloth, and arranging the plates and glasses on the table. She had tripped downstairs like a bird, not wishing to appear as if she had seen me coming, but I felt so happy, for I saw she had been expecting me, and I said to myself, "She loves me!"

"Oh, you are there, Kasper?" said she; "I thought you were still on the road this morning."

"Yes, Margredel, here I am," replied I, hanging my knapsack on the back of the arm-chair, and laying my clarionet on the window-seat; "I have just come from Orbay," Kirschberg, or whatever other of the villages in the neighbourhood it might be.

"You must have made great haste?"

"Yes, I came as fast as I could."

Then we looked at each other. She smiled, showing her little white teeth. I attempted to snatch a kiss, but she always managed to escape me, exclaiming—

"Kasper, Kasper, here is my father coming!"

Then she ran into the kitchen, and almost always, when I looked towards the street, I saw Uncle Conrad, with his broad shoulders, black felt hat, and grey jacket, returning from his vineyard. All these things I think I see before me still; I feel as if I were living that part of my life over again. Why is it that these happy days of our youth pass too quickly, and yet that we never can forget them?

I had the greatest respect for Uncle Conrad, and loved him as if he had been my own father, in spite of his harsh voice and manner when he was in a bad humour, and especially when he got downright angry. The last did not often happen, but when it did it was something terrible to see; his great hooked nose curved like an eagle's beak over his tight-pressed lips, his grey eyes darted fire, and his voice rang like the trumpet of the destroying angel. He never raised his hand, knowing himself his extraordinary strength, and fearing to do some terrible injury if he gave way to his anger.

Once, however, at the auberge of the Three Roses, where we had gone in the evening, as we usually did, to drink a bottle of wine in company with the vine-growers of Eckerswir, I saw him fly into a passion and turn quite pale, owing to a dispute about a particular way of planting vines. Old Meriâne asserted that the plants of the tokayer ought to be bent a little in the furrow to make them grow well, while Uncle Conrad maintained that they should be planted quite straight. At last Meriâne said that Uncle Stavolo knew nothing about vines, and that he wouldn't know a plant of tokayer from one of Drahenfeltz. Uncle thereupon got angry, and, striking his fist on the table, the glasses, tankards, and bottles leaped nearly to the ceiling. He had started to his feet, shouting in a voice of thunder—

“Come on, you others, let me see which of you will support Meriâne in what he says. I don't want to have anything to say to him; but the rest of you I will meet—three, four, ay, six to one!”

He looked round the room; no one moved. Then I knew that Uncle Conrad was the strongest man in all the country; I saw it with my own eyes. I had

heard indeed before that, that Mr. Stavolo, in his turn, had thrown all the village Herculeses who had made their appearance in the various wrestling-matches through the country, and that, even a few years before, he had challenged one Diemer, a woodcutter, who was called "The Oak of the Vosges" by reason of his extraordinary strength, and, at the first trial, had laid him flat on his back. Yes, I had heard that, but with us at home he had always shown himself so reasonable, and was so much in the habit of saying that brute force signified nothing, and that no one ought to boast of his strength, and while he said this he had stroked his chin with such a meek and saintly air, and seemed so penetrated with the truth of what he said, that I ended by believing him on his word, and looking on him as one of the most pacific of human beings. He was constantly repeating to me—

"Kasper, if you should ever happen to get into a dispute, do you know what I would advise you to do?"

"No, uncle."

"Well! As the Creator has given you a pair of long legs, make for the door at once, and take to your heels. As you haven't much more strength than a hare, the first blow would lay you sprawling on the ground, and the fight would go on over your prostrate body. Prudence, my boy, prudence is what I recommend you; it is the chief virtue of a clarionet-player who looks forward to getting married."

How could one suspect for a moment, after such judicious advice, that my uncle Conrad wasn't himself the most prudent of men, or that he could possibly care for anything except his vines, a glass of good wine, and a little cheerful music? But on this day that

I speak of I saw plainly that he was proud of his strength, and I was no little surprised at it.

However, having calmed down almost immediately, he made a great many excuses to old Meriâne, saying that he had spoken in this way only to see if, amongst all the young men who were present, any one of them would have courage enough to face his grey hairs. After which Father Meriâne admitted that Uncle Conrad was a good vine-grower, and a first-rate judge of plants of all kinds, as well as of farming and wine-making, fermentation, the preparation of vats—in short, of everything. He even said so much, and bestowed so many praises on Uncle Stavolo, that the latter was quite appeased, and replied, smiling, that Meriâne went too far, that no one could ever know the cultivation of vines thoroughly, that the more one learned on the subject the more there remained to learn, and that as experience was by far the safest guide in this as in other matters, the young should never boast of their knowledge in the presence of men like Father Meriâne, who was so much older and wiser.

So that, at last, both became affected, and towards eleven o'clock, when the watchman came to warn us that it was time to go, they were embracing each other, and calling each other the best vine-dressers and the worthiest fellows in all the country round as far as Thann, and even farther. And the feeling was so contagious that all the company became affected in like manner. And this is the way I came to know that Uncle Conrad did not really despise physical force as much as he pretended to do, in order to acquire a reputation for wisdom and discretion.

CHAPTER II.



OW, this year, towards the end of summer, Uncle Conrad had a cow ready to calve. She was the handsomest cow in Eckerswir, a large cream-coloured animal of the Swiss breed, and a first-rate milker, called Roesel. For a week previously, Hirsch, the veterinary, had called to see her every day, and each time had said, "She will calve to-morrow."

In the interval the anniversary of the fête of Kirschberg came round, where we were in the habit of going every year to dance and drink kirschwasser. This year the yield being very abundant of all kinds of fruits—black cherries, plums, mulberries, and myrtilles—every one who had been at Kirschberg brought word that the trees on the slopes around the town, and even to the margin of the forest, were so thickly covered with plums, that they had to be propped up to prevent them breaking. They told us also that at Father Yeri-Hans's farm they were busy distilling night and day, that they had found means to do without retorts by passing the vapour through huge barrels hooped with iron, and other stories of the like kind. Every one thought, therefore, that the fête would be magnificent, which annoyed us very much to hear, for we saw plainly, Margreth and I, that Uncle Conrad would scarcely be able to leave home. At last he himself took us aside in the sitting-room, and said—

"It's plain we can't go to the fête at Kirschberg this year. The veterinary tells us every day, 'It is sure to be to-morrow,' and, under these circumstances, I could

not think of leaving Roesel. No, I couldn't bring myself to leave an animal that cost me a hundred crowns, and that gives six pails of milk morning and evening, to the care of no one but Hirsch and the servant-maid; I shouldn't have an easy moment over yonder. Listen to me, my children: we will go to the fête of Wintzenheim instead. It comes off in about a fortnight, and we can enjoy our kirschwasser as well at the auberge of the Red Ox as at the Golden Pitcher, indeed better, as the kirchwasser is older there."

"You are quite right, I am sure, father," replied Margredel with rather a melancholy air.

And the matter was arranged in this way; we remained at home whilst the half of Eckerswir went to Kirschberg. Nothing was to be seen but spring-waggons setting off with their four, five, and six trusses of straw, in which were seated the townsfolk in their gala dresses, the hats and bonnets streaming with ribbons, and the girls with strings of beads twisted in their hair. We sat at the window watching them in a melancholy mood; and the young girls as they passed called out to Margredel—

"Hey! Margredel; aren't you coming? Make haste, put on your handsome skirt; we have still room for you."

"Thank you," replied Margredel; "I can't go to-day. Some other time."

And the young men shouted to me—

"Come, Kasper, get your clarionet; come along. You can ride Schwartz, can't you? Be quick—don't lose time."

And I shook my head.

Uncle Conrad was in the little garden behind the

house, busy propping up the branches of the fruit-trees, so as to be out of the way of seeing these things. This state of matters lasted till towards ten o'clock, when by degrees everything became silent again. The village looked quite deserted; no one was to be seen, except one or two old people sitting before their doors in the sun. Even the dogs had followed the waggon, and were no longer heard barking about the village as usual.

During dinner Uncle Stavolo kept saying that there was sure to be a great crowd at the fête, that there wouldn't be room to turn round, and that the innkeepers would certainly take advantage of this to get off their worst trash of wine and their mouldy cheese. He also insisted that we should be much better off at Wintzenheim with Father Michael Bloom, an old comrade of his, who had invited him a long time ago to go and taste his kougelhof cake, and take a glass or two of his brimbelwasser. Then we went down together to the cowhouse to see Roesel, and he gave it as his firm opinion that she must calve very soon, and if it took place that night, we would set off next morning early for the fête; but the fact was that the thing dragged on till the Tuesday, and then it was too late.

Meanwhile, in the evening of the same day, after supper, Uncle Conrad, who seldom smoked, and never anything but the tobacco which he grew himself in the garden behind the house, took a little boxwood pipe with a tulip-shaped bowl, and putting it into his waistcoat pocket, said to me—

“Come Kasper, we'll go and see what is going on at the Three Roses. I am sure that a good many of the neighbours have returned by this time from the fête. There's old Bremer, Meriâne, and Zapheri, who haven't

slept out of their own houses for the last thirty years. They never remain for the second day. If anything happens in the cowhouse, Margredel, send Orchel for me at once."

We left the room together.

When going downstairs, my uncle added—

"I confess I'm curious to know how they enjoyed themselves at the fête. However, we shall hear all about it."

We turned into the silent street, and after a few minutes' walk entered the great *salle-à-manger* of the Three Roses.

Uncle Conrad was not mistaken. Already a good number of the old folks had returned, and were sitting there smoking, with their elbows on the table, and giving an account of anything remarkable which they had seen during the day, reminding each other that in such and such a year—ten, twenty, or thirty years before—the fête of Kirschberg had been much finer; for instance, when Charles X. passed through the town, on the arrival of Maria Louisa in France, or in the time of Saint Just, when the great poplar tree was planted in the centre of the village. They lamented that everything was growing worse from day to day, that the young people had no longer the same life and spirit as formerly, that taxes were growing heavier, that the kirschwasser, the wine, the beer, the flour, the butcher's meat—in short, everything cost more than it used to do, that there was no saying when this state of things would end, and that it must be the abomination of desolation foretold in the Sacred Scriptures.

The old registrar of the *mairie* especially, Father Bremer, with his bag-wig carefully combed up on the

top of his head, and looking like a fur skull-cap, and his great Ulm pipe quite black with use, from which he drew a long puff about every half-hour—Father Bremer was in a sombre mood as usual, and with his two elbows on the table and his head resting on his hands, was looking steadfastly into his glass, and discoursing about bygone times.

Uncle Conrad and I took our seats along with the rest. Zapheri Mutz, the innkeeper, brought us a bottle of wine and two glasses, asking us at the same time if Roesel had calved yet. Uncle replied that she had not, and then we listened to what was going on.

Until ten o'clock nothing was talked of but the fêtes of Kirschberg of previous years, and especially of the last one. In opposition to the greffier's opinion, many of the company maintained that on no former occasion had there been a greater concourse of people or more dancers of both sexes; that the Madame Hütte had swarmed with them like a hive of bees; that old Yeri-Hans, having been guaranteed a sum of two hundred crowns from the games, had reconstructed the building with new planks, and had provided new flags and banners, and put rows of benches all round the hall—a thing every one must approve of, since it is only right that the grandfathers and grandmothers should have a comfortable seat from which to watch their grandsons and granddaughters dancing. They said also that the kirschwasser had a very fine flavour, that the vines promised well, and that the games of rampe, skittles, cock, and sheep had already covered Yeri-Hans's expenses.

From this they went on to talk of this thing and that, of the young men, the new fashion of tulle bon-

nets that Soffayd Kartiser had brought from Strasbourg, along with shoulder-of-mutton sleeves, and the hair arranged in a cross on combs half-a-foot high. The old greffier pronounced the former fashions of the Kirschberg infinitely prettier—the velvet toques with broad ribbons, the flat sleeves, the satin bodices embroidered with gold, the broad-striped silk petticoats, the long plaits of hair falling down behind to below the waist—in short, all the old fashions, from the three-cornered hat, scarlet waistcoat, and round-toed shoes with silver buckles, to the grey jacket of the miller and the white apron of the cheesemonger, seemed to him much handsomer and more becoming than the blouse and the cotton cap.

But these things had no interest for Uncle Conrad, who yawned behind his hand, and could scarcely keep his eyes open.

“Listen to me, Mr. Bremer,” cried old Meriâne all at once; “you are quite right in a great deal of what you say. Yes, I admit that the old gowns and the old head-gear were much prettier than the hair dressed in a cross and the grey sarraux. I even go farther and say that the choucroute and bacon were much better formerly, because they smoked the meat more carefully, and in place of using a wooden screw to press the choucroute, they put a large stone on the top, so that the stone kept always pressing it down, whereas, now-a-days, when you forget to turn the screw, the choucroute spoils in the cellar. I am of your opinion as regards all that, but nevertheless there are some points in which the young folks are fully equal to us.”

The registrar shook his head.

“You may shake your head as much as you please,”

said Meriâne ; “ what I say is true. Thus, for example, as regards wrestling, and all sports which require strength and agility, I ask you frankly, did you ever see a stouter or better made man than Yeri-Hans’s son, the young fellow who has just returned from Africa ? I venture to say he could knock down an ox with a blow of his fist. I ask you again, did you ever see such a Hercules in our time ? ”

The registrar seemed to be reflecting. Uncle Conrad fidgeted on his seat. He coughed as if about to reply ; but he remained silent, and old Meriâne added—

“ That tall artilleryman, I tell you, Bremer, wouldn’t be afraid to face any six men you could find—I mean ordinary men, of course, not such as Master Stavolo here—no, that would be going too far ; but I maintain that we have never had in our time any man who could compare with him as regards bodily strength.”

Then Meriâne emptied his glass, and Uncle Conrad asked with an air of indifference—

“ What artilleryman are you speaking of ? There have been strong men in every age of the world, but I must say I am rather surprised that I never heard of this artilleryman before.”

“ Why, he is the son of Yeri-Hans, the farmer, near Kirschberg ! ” said Meriâne.

“ Oh, yes ! now you mention it I remember—a tall, thin young chap, about six feet high—fair complexion with red cheeks—a regular thread-paper of a man. Yes, yes, Yeri’s son,” continued my uncle, twirling his thumbs ; “ and so you tell me he is wonderfully strong ? Well, I should never have thought it—that surprises me not a little.”

“ He was tall and fair-complexioned before he went

to Africa," said Meriâne, "but at the present time he has rather reddish hair, Master Stavolo, his skin is as brown as a berry, and his shoulders—why his shoulders are as broad as that," said he, holding his hands wide apart with an air of admiration.

"Length doesn't make strength," said Uncle Conrad, tossing off his glass abruptly. "Hans! a chopine! No, the height of a man proves nothing as regards his strength; I have seen very tall men who weren't at all strong. When any one speaks to me about strong men, I always ask, 'What have they done?'"

"It's easy to see that you were not at the fête, Master Conrad!" replied Meriâne; "if you had been, you would have known that nothing else is talked of through the whole country but Yeri-Hans's son, you would have known that he has thrown every one who had the boldness to enter the lists with him."

"Who were they?" asked my uncle.

"Why, good gracious, I can't remember all their names, as you may suppose, but they were all strong men, the very pick of the country—vine-growers, woodcutters, charcoal-burners, all Herculeses in their way. They didn't stand a minute. In one second they were on their backs with their heels in the air. It would have made your blood run cold. What a man that Yeri-Hans is, to be sure!"

At first my uncle Conrad said nothing; he coughed slightly; then, taking his pipe out of his pocket—

"There are several kinds of vine-growers," said he, with a strange smile. "I am quite willing to believe that your tall artilleryman is a stout fellow. He has no doubt learned in the regiment some of those tricks that Munch the Barber told us about, which consist of

hooking your opponent's leg, or even in giving him a kick now and then on the head. Yes, yes, I have heard of such things in my time. The soldiers learn these tricks from each other, and then when they return home to their villages they challenge all sorts of weak folks, poor, lame, deformed creatures, who haven't a breath of wind in their body, and by this means they make every one afraid of them, and you hear people saying right and left, 'What a terribly strong man! What a wrestler!' But, good gracious, when men come to have grey hairs in their heads, they should think a little before they speak. Although I say this, you can easily understand, Father Meriâne, that I don't attach any importance to such matters; if your artilleryman is as strong as you say, so much the better for him. Strength doesn't prove that you have reason; the oxen are a good deal stronger than any of us, but all that doesn't give them an ounce of sense. At the same time to hear people talk in this way provokes me. I would be very glad indeed to think that Yeri-Hans was the strongest man in the world; his father is one of my oldest companions and friends; but after all people should reflect a little before they talk in this way before sensible men."

Having said this, Uncle Conrad lighted his pipe at the candle, and Bremer, the registrar, exclaimed—

"Look here, Meriâne, if I had to bet on one of the two, I shouldn't hesitate long between your artilleryman and Master Stavolo; old as he is, Master Conrad——"

But uncle interrupted him—

"What on earth are you thinking of, Mr. Bremer? I match myself against a young man! Some ten or twenty years ago, I don't say; it might perhaps have

got my back up to hear it constantly repeated that any one was boasting he was the strongest man in the whole country round. I would have liked to try that; but at this time of day it is too late. No, no, let him fight with some one else; let him turn up his sleeves to the elbows, I predict that he will find his master, but it won't be Conrad Stavolo."

"Oh, I'm quite sure, Master Conrad, that at your age you wouldn't think of getting into grips with a young man," said Bremer; "but, frankly, if it came to that I would bet on you."

Uncle smiled, but at that moment the watchman appeared at the door, and rapping his great cane on the floor, said—

"Gentlemen, it is eleven o'clock."

Every one rose and took the way to his own house.

On our way home, Uncle Conrad, who seemed thoughtful, resumed the subject.

"That old Meriâne is losing his head; he is just the same as he always has been for the last thirty years. Everything he sees is sure to be the finest thing in the world. If one man beats another, straightway he is the strongest man in the universe; if he gets the better of two, his like has never been seen in the world since the days of Adam and Eve. I can't bear to hear people exaggerating in this way. But here we are at home. Good night, Kasper; I only hope Roesel will come to the point to night."

"Yes, uncle. Margredel wouldn't be sorry, I can see, to have a turn or two in the waltz at Kirschberg. She looks a little sad about it."

I mounted to my bedroom, and Uncle Stavolo went to his.

CHAPTER III.



UNCLE CONRAD, not being able to leave the house on account of Roesel, took his way up to the pigeon-loft early the following morning. In passing my room he opened the door and told me to follow him.

The pigeon-loft was in the very top of the roof, above the hay-loft, and required you to climb up a ladder to get into it. Uncle Stavolo had boarded it round by nailing planks to the laths and joists, and had taken the precaution of surrounding the opening with sharp-pointed spikes, to keep out the weasels and martens, as these carnivorous animals are very fond of blood. We entered, then, one after the other, and the pigeons knew us so well that they came and lighted on our shoulders. I was even in the habit of putting grains of wheat in my mouth, which they would fight and struggle with each other to take out with their bills.

Uncle visited all the nests; then, suddenly going to the window, he leaned out, looking round at the hills of the Freeland, Mittelweicer, and Kiensheim, all thickly covered with vines as far as the eye could reach. He remained for a length of time leaning out of the window, and the pigeons, no longer seeing the daylight, began to spread their wings over their young ones. At last I said to myself—

“What on earth can uncle be looking at there?”

He was looking at his vines, which he had not been able to visit for the last three days.

At length he came away from the window, and said, in a cheerful voice—

“Kasper, if this weather lasts for six weeks longer, we shall have what may be called a year rich in all the productions of the earth. There is now no fear of the vines, the grain is forming in the ears, and all that is wanting now is the heat of the sun’s rays, which contain within them a peculiar virtue. The sun’s rays may be said in some sort to form the very life of men and plants, and this year they have more virtue than usual, owing to the comet. Yes, we shall have a famous year, and I am right well pleased that I didn’t sell my spare cocks, notwithstanding the high price that Meriáne offered me for them. The folks on the top of the mountain will have no cause to complain either, for there fell an abundance of rain in the spring, which helped on the potatoes and put body in the grain. Look up there at the very top of the hill, and these yellow patches among the pines; these are the oat-fields of Pelsly, the Anabaptist; he has one field of six arpents. And there, lower down, under the shadow of the Reethal, these great brown squares which you see are Turckheim’s potatoes. The stalks are beginning to wither on account of the great heat, but they can’t take any harm now, as they are full-grown. In short, every one ought to be contented and happy, for the Lord has poured down His blessings richly on the whole earth. Let us go down again, Kasper, and take care to shut the door carefully after you, to prevent the weasels getting in.”

Then he descended the ladder backwards. I followed him through the darkness, after shutting the door and shooting the bolt. When we reached the hay-loft below, uncle, laying his hand on my shoulder, said to me, laughing—

"This is all the more reason, Kasper, why you should take to the road, and not let your clarionet be idle. The better the season the more open-handed the people will be. They won't think twice about spending a couple of groschen, nor double that either. Try and earn some money, try and make up your two arpents of vines this winter; with the three you have, and mine, it will be no bad beginning of your housekeeping. Hey! my lad, remember that youth is the time for work."

Then I felt thoroughly happy, for in speaking in this way, Uncle Conrad evidently alluded to my marriage with Margredel. He then went down into the yard, and from my window, which looked in that direction, I saw him enter the great shed, go up to the rows of pipes and hogsheads, examine the hoops carefully one after the other, then stop for a few minutes afterwards with folded arms before the wine-press. Lastly, he opened the door of the cellar to the right, and I heard him knock on the empty barrels with his knuckles, the sound echoing through the vaulted roof.

The sun was shining down brilliantly.

Twelve having struck, I went down to the *salle-à-manger*, where I found Margredel in the act of laying the cloth. Then I told her what her father had said, taking her hand as I did so. She cast down her eyes, but said nothing.

"Ah, Margredel!" I exclaimed, "I fully believe you love me; but if you would only tell me so I should be the happiest fellow in the village."

Then she replied in a low, soft voice—

"Why should I not love you, Kasper? Doesn't every one respect and like you? Are you not one of the most——"

"No, no, that is not the answer I want you to give me, Margredel; all I want you to say is, 'Kasper, you are the one whom I love!'"

"Why, Kasper," said she, opening the door of the kitchen, "you are never satisfied."

As uncle was just then coming along the passage, I hadn't time to say much more. He entered the room with a grave, deliberate air, and, taking his seat, he spread out his napkin over his knees, although Margredel had not yet put anything on the table.

"It is wonderful," said he, looking out at the women passing our windows with great panniers on their heads; "it is really wonderful to see what numbers of people are returning from Kirschberg! Ever since morning it has been nothing but one stream of hampers of plums and casks of kirschwasser."

Just then Margredel entered, and placed the smoking soup-tureen on the table. I took my seat beside her, and uncle helped us to soup; then Orchel brought in the dish of choucroute, with a small piece of boiled bacon on the top. Uncle Conrad helped us each to a portion, and ate his in silence. No one was thinking of anything in particular, when, towards the end of dinner, raising himself in his chair, he exclaimed—

"There is nothing talked of everywhere but this artilleryman. Just now I heard two old women passing along the holly lane behind the cart-shed saying to one another, 'The artilleryman did this!' 'The artilleryman did that!' It's astonishing! it's really astonishing!"

I then saw that he was still thinking of what Father Meriâne had told us the evening before at the Three Roses, and this surprised me no little, for Uncle

Conrad wasn't in the habit of thinking of anything but his own affairs, and never troubled his head about other people's business.

Margredel also appeared surprised.

"What artilleryman are all the people talking about?" said she.

"Why, that tall Yeri-Hans, who has just come home on furlough," said he; "he gives out that he is the strongest man in all the country."

"The son of old Yeri of Kirschberg? Oh, I know him well," said Margredel, with an air of great animation. "A tall, handsome young fellow, with fair complexion and very light hair, isn't he, father? I remember so well how he looked when I saw him at Kirschberg, seven years ago, the first time you took me to the fête. He was dancing in the Madame Hütte, and every one was saying, 'What a handsome young fellow! How well he dances! There's not in the whole village the equal of old Yeri's son as a dancer.' I was very young, of course, at that time, and kept behind backs with Aunt Christine, but I would have liked right well to dance all the same; my feet were going pit-a-pat with eagerness. I looked on at every one amusing themselves, but no one seemed to think about me. All at once Yeri, who was walking round the hall, saw me, and immediately stopped, crying, 'Make room there! make room!' I had no idea what he meant. Then, as the neighbours turned their heads to see what was the matter, he came up to me, saying, 'Why, Miss Margredel, can it be you? Then Master Conrad is here, I suppose? I never once saw you. But, good gracious, why are you not dancing?' 'What are you thinking of?' cried Aunt Christine; 'she is still

far too young, Mr. Yeri.' 'Too young! She is quite a grown-up young lady, and the prettiest in the whole fête too; I hope she will take me for her partner!' Then he caught me by the hand, and led me out into the floor, and the music struck up again. Good gracious! how we did dance that night, till two o'clock in the morning! All the other girls were jealous. I shall remember it all my life!"

Thus spoke Margredel, her eyes sparkling and her cheeks flushing up as she thought of these things. But whilst she spoke I felt a pang shoot through my heart, my spirits sank, and I could not utter a word. Uncle Conrad also was silent, and seemed in a brown study.

"And so Yeri has come home again!" continued Margredel; "he doesn't remember that, I am sure; but no matter, he made me spend a very happy evening all the same. It was my first dance!"

"Well, yes. It is just that tall fair youngster that every one is talking of," replied uncle. "I don't say he isn't strong; I only say they shouldn't place him above the whole universe. If I was a young man, that shouldn't go on. Fortunately, Kasper, at all events, is prudent; he'll never seek a quarrel with folks of that kind. But every one looks at these things in his own way, and I shouldn't be the least surprised if, in the long run, some stout fellow like Polack, the charcoal-burner, of Hartzberg, for example, or Diemer, the woodcutter, of Schneethal, may get tired of hearing all this boasting, and one fine morning may take him quietly by the collar, and lay him under the table. Yes, that will very probably happen to Yeri; and a right good thing it would be too, for it was quite too

much what old Meriâne said yesterday—altogether too much.”

Then Uncle Conrad rose, clapped on his broad-brimmed hat, and took one or two turns up and down the room, his lips tightly pressed together. I was quite pleased at what he had said. Margredel cleared away the plates and knives and forks, and folded up the tablecloth in silence. When matters had gone on in this way for some minutes, Orchel ran in, exclaiming that Roesel was just going to calve.

Instantly everything else was forgotten in this interesting announcement; Uncle Conrad took off his jacket, and said to Margredel and me—

“You had better stay here. You would only be in the way. Follow me, Orchel. When all is over you can come too.”

They left the room, and immediately Margredel asked me why her father was so angry with Yeri-Hans. I told her it was on account of his extraordinary boasting; that this tall artilleryman was always bragging, since his return from Africa, that he was the strongest man and the prettiest fellow in the whole county, and that the girls couldn't help falling in love with him.

Margredel listened without making any reply, and when I had done she hurried away with downcast eyes to the kitchen to wash up the plates and dishes.

Half-an-hour afterwards, Orchel having come in to tell us that Roesel had calved, we went down to the stable together, where we saw the pretty creature licking her calf with such a tender, affectionate look, and Uncle Conrad, in high spirits, exclaiming—

“Now that it is over, I think nothing of the trouble

I have had. In five or six years we shall have none but the Swiss breed ; it is much the best. As the calves increase I shall get rid of the old beasts."

Margredel and I were struck with admiration and surprise to see the little thing already busy at its mother's teats. It was really extraordinary at that age, and even uncle himself said—

"Let people prate to us after that about animals having no reason! Where is the infant that could stand straight up the moment after it was born? Which of them could take the breast of itself, and look round at the folks, like this little animal?"

He was loud in his praises, too, of the beauty of the calf, its size, and the square well-formed knees and flat legs. Orchel had a basket on her arm, and was sprinkling it over with salt to induce Roesel to lick it.

During the rest of the day nothing was talked of but this important event. Every one was in high spirits, and until evening the door of the stable was left open, to allow the neighbours to flock in and admire the pretty little animal. There were always three or four at a time in front of the crib, and Uncle Conrad, stationed in the centre of the group, was never tired of pouring forth eulogiums on the Swiss breed of cattle, and explaining that whether for work, the richness of the milk, or the quality of the meat, they had not their equal on earth.

Every one envied us, and evening having now come, we drank a good draught of Kütterlé to Roesel's health, after which every one went to bed, Uncle Conrad having had enough, he said, of the foolish gossip of the Three Roses, and the senseless remarks of Father Meriâne.

CHAPTER IV.



THE following day, which happened to be the Wednesday of the Kirschberg fête, Uncle Conrad went off very early to pay a visit to his vines. The weather was superb; and when I came downstairs, about seven o'clock, the three windows of the *salle-à-manger* were open, and Margredel, with the house-brush in her hand, was talking on the steps outside with little Anna Durlach, tall Berbel Finck, and three or four others of her companions who had returned from the fête.

"Oh! what a delightful time we had! How we danced! How we enjoyed ourselves! What a pity, Margredel, that you weren't there! There were young men from all the villages round—from Orbay, Turckheim, Trois-Epis, Ribauville, St. Hippolyte—from everywhere in short. Nickel is very angry because I took a turn or two in the waltz with Fritz, but I don't care a straw,"

And so on—and so on—chattering away like a flock of magpies.

All along the street nothing was to be seen but country carts unloading their cargoes of Kougelhof cakes, pâtés, sacks of plums, and casks of Kirschwasser, children blowing their wooden trumpets, and farm-labourers unharnessing the horses and leading them off to the stables.

I was quietly seated at the table breakfasting by myself, and listening to what was going on on the steps, but without paying much attention, when all at

once the name of Yeri-Hans was mentioned, and as I listened, lo and behold, Margredel, who had been standing with her back to me for the last quarter of an hour, gave a glance into the room through the half-open door, stooping down a little as she did so, and the next moment all was silent. This didn't appear to me to be natural, and I said to myself—

“Why is Margredel afraid of them speaking of Yeri-Hans before me?”

All the morning this idea haunted me incessantly. I couldn't remain for a moment in one place. I would have given half of all I was worth to have heard that some one had broken three or four of this artilleryman's front teeth, or that he had got his nose flattened by a blow of the fist of one of his adversaries. I went about from one house to another, talking of the fête, and everywhere I was told that Yeri-Hans was the strongest man and best wrestler in all Alsace and the Vosges. What a misfortune it is to have to suffer in this way without any fault of your own!

At last, towards eleven o'clock, having returned to our own house, I saw Uncle Conrad coming up the street looking almost as melancholy as myself. He stopped from time to time to talk to the neighbours, which was contrary to his usual habit. Leaning with my elbow on the window-sill, I watched him coming along. Just as he came opposite the house there was tall Mr. Bastian, our schoolmaster, with his threadbare hat, his broad-tailed apple-green coat, garnished with metal buttons as large as cymbals, his short breeches, and immense square-toed shoes with copper buckles, descending the street with a majestic air.

Mr. Bastian was returning from the fête, his blue linen umbrella under his arm, and his nose in the air. He had been *throwing at the cock*, at the rate of three throws a penny, on the Thirmark, and as he had never yet met any one who could equal him as a marksman, Uncle Conrad naturally thought he had carried off the prize of the cock, as he had done in the preceding years.

Mr. Bastian was also looking very grave and serious; his immensely long legs were advancing with measured strides; he held himself as stiff as a ramrod, and when the children shouted to him in passing, "Good day, Mr. Bastian! good day, Mr. Bastian!" he made no reply, and gazed steadily upwards at the clouds.

"Hallo! Master Bastian; good morning to you," said Uncle Conrad. "How goes it with you?"

The schoolmaster, recognising the voice, lowered his eyes, and, hastily taking off his great broad-brimmed hat and bending low, he replied humbly—

"Quite well, Mr. Stavolo, quite well, with my dutiful respects."

Then Uncle Conrad, taking him aside into the recess in front of the steps, underneath the window, began as follows:—

"Come this way for a moment, Master Bastian, out of the way of the vehicles; I am always glad to have a chat with you."

"You are very kind, Mr. Stavolo, very kind indeed," said the schoolmaster, highly flattered at this speech.

They came close up to the foot of the stone steps, smiling.

"Well!" said uncle, "and how did the fête go off at Kirschberg, Master Bastian? You have just returned from it, have you not?"

"Why yes, Mr. Stavolo, as you see. It went off pretty well—pretty well on the whole—there were a good many people there."

"Yes, yes, the weather was favourable; that quite accounts for it. It's very natural. And how were the prunes selling?"

"At thirty-two sous the bushel, Mr. Stavolo."

"Good—very good! And the kirschwasser?"

"At twenty-four sous the litre, the first quality."

"Why, that wasn't dear—no, not at all dear."

Uncle Conrad was silent for a moment. I saw clearly that he was thinking of something, but I couldn't imagine what it was, when suddenly he asked—

"And you bore off the prize at the cock, as usual, I suppose, Master Bastian? But I needn't ask you—that's a matter of course."

At these words the schoolmaster reddened to the tips of his ears, his nose seemed to grow sharper and longer, he looked upwards, primmed in his lips with a little cough, and at last replied—

"Pardon me, Mr. Stavolo, I must acknowledge—my conscience constrains me to acknowledge—that, this year, I did not carry off the prize at the cock."

"What! How is that? You didn't win the prize at the cock?" exclaimed uncle, greatly surprised. "But who won it, then?"

Master Bastian had resumed something of his usual calm demeanour, the colour died away from his cheeks, and he said—

"It was a soldier—an artilleryman."

In a moment my uncle drew himself up to his full height, and squaring his shoulders, and holding his head high, exclaimed—

“What artilleryman?”

“His name, I think, is Mr. Yeri-Hans, junior; he is a young man belonging to the neighbourhood. Yes, he won the prize at the cock, and many other considerable prizes, Mr. Stavolo. We ought to render homage to the superiority of our competitors, and I consider that I am only fulfilling a duty in publishing my own defeat.”

Uncle Conrad was silent for a few moments; then, raising his voice—

“Ah! so he has won the cock! He throws well, then, this youngster?”

“Very well, very well indeed; I must admit it.”

Then, after a pause, apparently to collect his ideas, Master Bastian, his two hands resting on the top of his umbrella, behind his long flat back, his broad-brimmed beaver drooping on the back of his neck, and his eyes raised to heaven, resumed, in a melancholy tone—

“Yes, this young man has carried off the prize at the cock! I might diminish the force of my own defeat by lessening my adversary, but I shall not do so; I shall not imitate the deplorable example of those who think to raise themselves by lowering others. I may say, however, Mr. Stavolo, that I am not the first who has suffered from the reverses of fortune. I might quote, in ancient times, the example of Cyrus, conquered by a simple woman, after so many signal victories—of Hannibal——”

“Yes, yes,” interrupted uncle, “I know all that; but tell me, how did this happen? Was the play honourable and straightforward?”

“Quite honourable.”

Then Mr. Bastian, pulling an immense blue and red striped linen handkerchief from his hind coat-pocket,

wiped his forehead, down which the perspiration was dropping, and said—

“Towards half-past nine o’clock, when I arrived, the cock was already on his perch. In the first place, I saw that they had increased the distance by a toise and a half, which I measured myself, a very considerable addition indeed to the former distance, which was twelve toises. However, as the conditions were the same for all, I decided to compete. The cock had already been touched several times, but so slightly that all his feathers were still on. I remained looking on till towards eleven o’clock without taking any part in the competition.

“At that hour, Mr. Stavolo, I chose three stones, and touched the cock twice. This encouraged me, and up to three o’clock I had expended twelve sous, which makes eighteen stones, of which more than a fifth had touched; but this cock, being of the wild breed of the High Vosges, was so tenacious of life that the smallest drop of brandy set him on his legs again. At last, between three and four o’clock, I began to despair. The sum expended so greatly exceeded my usual custom and the value of the prize that I was for a time quite undecided how to act. I finally decided, however, to take three more stones, and with the third I so stunned the cock that he lay for more than a minute doing nothing but opening and shutting his eyes. All the company present were just proclaiming me victorious, when the young man of whom I have told you suddenly comes up. He opens the cock’s bill and blows into it, whereupon the bird awakens, as it were out of a dream, raises itself on its feet, and shakes its comb as if to make fun of the spectators. I was really in despair,

Mr. Stavolo; such a thing had never been seen in Alsace in the memory of man. Nevertheless, I still retained a sort of confidence that no other would succeed better than I had done, and this was the general opinion also. No person seemed willing to throw at an animal which had shown itself so rebellious against the fate which is reserved for us all, sooner or later.

“But this feeling seemed to have no weight with Yeri-Hans, junior. Without apparently taking any pains, he chose three sharp-cutting stones, portions of the bottom of an old pitcher, declaring that he would not exceed that number, and that if he did not kill the cock with these three stones, he would abandon it, without further interference, to its destiny.

“Every one looked on this as a piece of sheer braggadocio, and for my part, I said to myself, laughing, Mr. Stavolo—‘Here is another instance of the folly and presumptuousness of youth, puffed up with a sense of its own merits.’ Well, Mr. Yeri-Hans took off his artillery jacket, and threw his first stone, which struck about two lines below the perch, and with such force that all those present could see the mark. With the second he touched the cock, and knocked off so many of its feathers that it looked as if it was regularly plucked all over the right side. Every one thought the affair was at an end; but thereupon, in my turn exercising a just reciprocity, I blew into the cock’s bill, which staggered up on the perch, its nostrils full of blood. In this way the matter was left undecided; but with his third stone the artilleryman aimed so true that he cut off the cock’s head at the junction with the neck, and in consequence of this casualty it became impossible to revive it, either by pouring brandy down

its throat or blowing into its bill, seeing that the head was lying on the ground. This decided the victory."

During this narrative Uncle Conrad listened with an air of wonder and admiration. At last he said—

"Yes, that was neatly done. I have always thought that this youngster was much more adroit than most of the people about; but, after all, strength is strength, and no amount of sleight-of-hand can make a pine stronger than an oak. That's what I will always maintain."

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Stavolo," said the school-master; "this young man is as strong as he is adroit. In the same way that he won the prize at the cock so did he vanquish the strongest men in the country at the wrestling match."

"Who were they?" exclaimed uncle.

"Their number is incalculable," replied Master Bastian, puffing out his cheeks and raising his eyes to heaven; "but to mention only one. You know Diemer, the woodcutter of the Schnéethâl?"

"Certainly I know him," said Uncle Conrad.

"Well, Mr. Stavolo, he threw Diemer as if he had been a fly."

"He laid Diemer on the ground on his two shoulders?"

"Precisely; on his two shoulders."

"Why that, Mr. Bastian, if you saw it yourself, surprises me more than all the rest."

"I saw it, Mr. Stavolo."

"You saw it! But do you know the rules of the match? Did you observe if there was no crooking of the legs; if they caught below the arms, round the waist; if there were no feints or tricks?"

"I saw only one thing—viz., that Yeri-Hans caught

the woodcutter by the shoulders and threw him on his back; and then, as the other was about to commence again, he lifted him up suddenly and threw him over the palisade of the Madame Hütte as if he had been a sack."

"All these are only tricks," said uncle, who had turned quite pale. "But there's twelve o'clock striking. Thanks, Mr. Bastian; I must go in to dinner."

"I have the honour to wish you good day, Mr. Stavolo," said the schoolmaster, raising his beaver. Then he added, "Precisely as I have related the affair to you so it happened."

"Yes, yes," said uncle; "you saw nothing that you ought to have seen. But no matter; he is an adroit young fellow all the same, this Yeri-Hans."

And thereupon Uncle Conrad mounted the steps in a thoughtful mood, and Mr. Bastian proceeded down the street.

In the afternoon of the same day Waldhorn came to tell me that we were engaged to play at Lotchen Omacht's wedding, the daughter of the miller at Berghheim; that Zapheri, of Guebwiller, was to take the trombone, Cuckoo Peter and his nephew Mathias the double-bass and the violin, and myself the clarionet; that he would try to get a drum at Zellemburg, and, if there was none to be had, Brügel, the watchman, would willingly consent to take the part for three francs the evening.

We set out together at nightfall. And as the wedding gaieties lasted for two days I did not get back to Eckerswir till the Saturday following, about ten o'clock in the morning. I had earned my six crowns, which naturally put me in good spirits.

CHAPTER V.



WHEN returning along the Grand Rue, I could see already that Margredel was alone in the house. She was in the habit, when her father went off to his vines in the morning, of opening the windows of the large *salle-à-manger* to air the room, and just then the windows were wide open.

I ran on, therefore, with my clarionet under my arm, and my heart beating with pleasure, thinking to surprise her; but just as I was going to mount the steps, who should I see but Waldine the gipsy, with her long goat's face, her stump of a pipe between her blue lips, and her little Kalep, as black as a prune, in a sack on her back, coming down, her old shoes clattering from step to step, and she herself laughing and scratching her head.

Uncle Conrad couldn't endure this class of people; he always said gipsies were good for nothing but stealing and plundering, and carrying messages between the lads and lasses from house to house in secret, to earn a penny or two. When any of them happened to mistake the door and called on us, he shouted at them in a voice of thunder—

“Will you leave this, you pack of vagabonds? Begone this moment! You had better take care! There is nothing to be had here but good heavy blows of the stick!”

So they seldom or never ventured near us.

You may imagine, therefore, how much I was surprised at the sight of this woman. I said to myself—

"I'm certain she has been stealing something or other, no matter what—either hemp, or bacon, or eggs—from the kitchen cupboard, the more so that she is laughing."

I was so sure of this that I was just going to cry out, when she hurried down the remaining steps, and almost at the same moment I saw Margredel leaning out of the window, and looking after her with a pleased air. Then I kept silent, but I could scarcely tell you what a crowd of ideas passed through my head. Margredel, seeing me, drew back as if to go on with her sweeping up the room, and I entered, saying—

"Oh, good morning, Margredel; here I am back again, you see."

She seemed a little out of temper, and replied—

"Oh! it's you, Kasper; you weren't long away this time."

"Ah, Margredel, it's not kind of you to say that," exclaimed I, laughing, but all the while feeling very sad inwardly; "no, it isn't kind of you; it's plain you haven't thought the time long without me."

She appeared quite embarrassed at this, and replied after a moment or two—

"You are always seeing something to blame me for, Kasper. Every time we happen to be alone together, the first thing you do is to find fault with me."

"Well! have I no cause?" exclaimed I.

But seeing that, in place of excusing herself, she was walking away to the kitchen and leaving me standing there like a fool—

"See, Margedel," said I, "although you don't think about me, I can never forget you! Look here—I have just brought this for you."

And I handed her a magnificent blue silk ribbon which I had in my bag.

She opened the paper with a half-pleased, half-angry air, and when she had looked at the ribbon and saw that it was very pretty, all at once, smiling at me with tears in her eyes, she said—

“Kasper, you are a kind, good fellow all the same. Yes, yes, I do love you dearly!”

Then she kissed me—a thing which she had never done before. I felt somehow quite sad. I would have liked to ask her what the gipsy woman had been doing in the house, but I durst not venture. I only said—

“It pleases me to see that you like the ribbon, Margredel. All along the road I was fearing it would not be to your taste.”

“Yes, it is quite to my taste,” said she, going forward to the glass, and folding it in a bow underneath her pretty rosy chin; “it is really beautiful; you have gratified me greatly, Kasper.”

Hearing that, I forgot all the rest, and I asked—

“What did that gipsy woman want here?”

Margredel blushed up, and I saw by the expression of her eyes that she was a good deal agitated.

“Waldine?” said she.

“Yes, Waldine. What business had she here?”

“She is a poor woman, with her little child. I gave her some nuts. But it is time I was going to see how the dinner is getting on. There’s eleven o’clock; my father will be back immediately.”

And she hurried off into the kitchen. I mounted to my bedroom to lay aside my knapsack and clarionet, my mind running upon what had happened, and especially on Margredel’s agitation, and thinking to myself that

she had, perhaps, been having her fortune told, for as regards sweethearts, there were none in the village but myself. Every one knew that Father Stavolo did not understand joking on that subject.

This conclusion appeared to me a natural one, and I ended by thinking that I was wrong to feel uneasy, that Margredel only did as all other young girls do, and that she had good grounds to reproach me for my mistrust of her. This put me in good spirits again. At last, in about a quarter of an hour, as I was still dreaming about all these things, I heard Uncle Conrad's loud voice calling to me from the foot of the stairs—

“Hey, Kasper, come down to dinner. So here you are back again! What a handsome ribbon you have brought Margredel! You will ruin yourself, boy.”

I went downstairs, and uncle laughed so heartily that it made me too feel quite contented and happy. A huge omelette with bacon was already on the table. Whilst we were eating I told how the wedding at Bergheim had gone off, a subject which Margredel was never tired of listening to.

But towards the end of dinner, and just as we were going to rise from table, there comes a hotte and pannier up the steps in front of the windows, and then a knock at the door.

“Come in! Why, it's Mother Robichon and her son!” cried Uncle Conrad. “Good day, Mother Robichon, good day; it's a long time now since I saw you.”

It was Mother Robichon and her son Nicholas, the colporteurs, who carried the glass ware of Wildenstein about the country for sale. The old woman had her great pannier full of glasses, the männel gläser, which are sold in thousands all over Alsace, while Nicholas's

huge hotte, which towered above his head like a helmet, was crammed with bottles of all kinds. These honest folks were not sorry to sit down for a little, for it was very warm outside, and the road from Wildenstein to Eckerswir is rather a long one.

"Sure enough, Master Conrad, it is ourselves and no other," said the old woman. "We have come to see if you want any goblets."

"Very good, very good; sit you down, Mother Robichon; we will talk of that by-and-by."

He helped the old woman to put down her pannier, whilst I supported Nicholas's hotte on the edge of the table to allow him to take off his shoulder-straps. Then we propped the hotte up against the wall, and Uncle Conrad, who liked honest, industrious folks, cried out—

"Margredel, bring a couple of glasses; Mother Robichon and Nicholas will take a glass of wine with us. Sit down; bring forward your chairs here, near the table."

"You are very good," said the mother, taking her seat. "It's not a thing to be refused, a glass of wine, on a warm day like this."

Nicholas, with his blue and red striped cotton cap, his blouse, his grey linen trousers, and his thick hob-nailed shoes, all white with dust, remained standing in the middle of the room, not venturing to sit down.

"Come along, Nicholas, take a seat," said uncle to him, pointing to a chair.

Then he sat down.

Margredel brought the glasses, and uncle filled them to the brim.

"Your health, Mother Robichon."

“And yours too, and may God reward you!”

They drank, and uncle, who was in high spirits, began to talk of this thing and that; of the hardships of a pedlar's life, of its bad pay, the length of way they had to walk to earn their bread, &c. Then he inquired the price of glasses; how many each auberge would require, how much they made each journey—in short, he asked about everything which took place in Alsace, from Belfort to Strasburg, for it was his habit to question strangers in this way. He liked to know everything.

Mother Robichon sighed; she said the times were getting harder every day. Nicholas, with his two hands resting on his knees, and his shoulders bent forward, said nothing; only, from time to time, he gave a look at the bottle, and then Uncle Conrad filled the glasses again, which seemed to please him greatly, for his great thick lips parted in a broad grin, and he wiped his nose with the back of his sleeve, as if to prepare himself for a good long drink. But the old woman was not in a hurry, and he waited till she put forward her hand.

Meanwhile Margredel and I listened, pitying these poor people, and thinking what a hard life they led, summer and winter, as long as they were able to walk, and at the end nothing but poverty and suffering, notwithstanding all their pains. I blessed Providence for having given me a taste for the clarionet in place of Nicholas's hotte. At last, after beating about the bush for a long time, Uncle Conrad exclaimed—

“By-the-bye, Mother Robichon, you were at the fête at Kirschberg, of course?”

“Yes, Mr. Stavolo, yes, we were there. At the

fête of Kirschberg, look you, the kirschwasser and the myrtille brandy are the cause of more glasses and bottles being broken than at all the other fêtes in Alsace. We always arrive with our panniers full, and return to Wildenstein with them quite empty. Sometimes Nicholas carries a little cask of kirschwasser in his hotte for the gentlemen of Wildenstein, but not every year."

"Oh! so you were at Kirschberg," said uncle. "Tell me, did you hear any talk of a son of Yeri-Hans, an artilleryman?"

"Hear any talk of him!" said the mother, clasping her withered hands; "good gracious! I should think so, Mr. Stavolo, and plenty of that, too."

"Oh! very good. And is it all true that people say about him?"

"True! Mercy on us! That it is indeed. I couldn't tell you half of it. Why, that man, Mr. Stavolo, is more like what you would read of in ancient times. And a handsome man, too, a man——"

"Come now, Mother Robichon," interrupted uncle, "you slept in Mr. Yeri-Hans's, the father's, barn, I suppose, this year, as usual, and——"

The old woman guessed instantly what uncle would be at, and replied—

"As for that, Mr. Stavolo, we did sleep in Mr. Yeri-Hans's barn, but that is not what makes us speak as we do; no, what we say is the downright truth. A handsomer man, a better dancer, or a more good-humoured, kind-hearted fellow is not to be found in the whole country round than that artilleryman."

"I don't say anything to the contrary," cried uncle; "but——"

"I should tell you, in the first place," continued the old woman, "that when I arrived in the fair he knew me in a moment, and called out, 'Hallo! why there's Mother Robichon! Good day, Mother Robichon, I'm glad to see you. Always getting on well, I hope?' And he made me sit down, and poured me out a glass of wine. But more than that, if you'll believe me, he bought a great cake of gingerbread in the fair, half a pound weight, I'm sure, and gave it to me, saying—

"'Mother Robichon, do you remember once on a time, nearly eighteen years ago, when you used to come to the farm and bring me little aniseed cakes?' And it was the pure truth, Mr. Stavolo. At that time the poor child was quite pale and thin; Mother Yeri had no hope he would live, and I used to bring him spice cakes from Hospes', the apothecary's, that I heard were good for worms. And now, good gracious! to see what a man he is! What a handsome, fine-looking man! Ah, to see folks when they are children, you never know what they will turn out."

Thus spoke the old woman, scarcely giving herself time, in her eagerness, to take breath. Uncle Conrad seemed impatient. Margreder listened with lips half parted, and I looked at her, thinking, "How her eyes sparkle!"

The thought of the gipsy woman recurred to me in spite of myself.

"Very good," cried uncle; "I see, he gave you gingerbread. It was very kind of him, no doubt; it proves he is grateful. But why do the people say he is the strongest man in the world?"

"As for the world, Mr. Stavolo, I don't know. No,

I should say there must be many men as strong in the world; but the strongest man in all this country he certainly is."

"In all this country!" said uncle. "And what about Polak, the charcoal-burner, Diemer, the wood-cutter——"

"He laid them flat on the ground," interrupted the old woman.

"How do you mean? Who did he lay flat?"

"The charcoal-burner, Mr. Stavolo."

"The charcoal-burner was there, then?"

"Yes; he was the last he threw. Even after the thing was over they had to give Polak three large glasses of kirschwasser, owing to the exertions he had made. His knees were trembling, and his hands and shoulders too. They thought he was going to die."

"You saw that?"

"I saw it, Mr. Stavolo. Wasn't it so, Nicholas?"

"Yes, mother," replied the lad in a low voice.

Then Uncle Conrad, looking down at the table and whistling something or other through his teeth, said no more. So that Mather Robichon, after a minute or two, went on—

"And now that I think of it, Mr. Stavolo, he even spoke of you."

"Of me?" said uncle, raising his head.

"Yes; he said, rubbing his hands, 'Well, Mother Robichon, I have put them all under the table, but there's one left stronger than any of them—Father Conrad Stavolo. We must have a look into the whites of each other's eyes, and when I have laid that man on his back, without doing him any harm, be it understood, for he is a man I respect, I may cross my arms and wait

till some Hercules comes down from the North to meet me.' ”

While Mother Robichon was speaking Uncle Conrad's cheeks gradually contracted, his hooked nose curved fiercely, and his eyes darted half-suppressed glances of fire.

“He said that, did he?”

“Yes, Mr. Stavolo.”

“Scoundrel!” muttered uncle, endeavouring to restrain himself; “to speak so of a man like me—a man of my age—a man——”

“But,” cried the old woman, “he didn't mean to do you any harm.”

“Harm!” shouted uncle in a loud voice—“harm! Let him take care that Conrad Stavolo doesn't go in search of him. Harm, indeed!”

And raising his finger—

“Let him take care! To challenge a peaceable man—a man that has fought more than fifty battles——”

Here he rose to his feet—

“A man who has sent Staumitz spinning, the famous Staumitz of the high mountain, like a fly—yes, I sent him spinning! And Rochart, the terrible Rochart, who could carry twelve hundredweight; and Durand, the tall sawyer, who upset a bull by its horns; and Mutz, and Nickel Loos, and Toubac, the smuggler, and Hertzberg, the butcher, of Strasburg—all, all passed between my legs!” shouted he in a voice that made the window-panes rattle.

Then all at once he calmed down, took his seat again, emptied his glass at a draught, and said—

“I care no more for this artilleryman of yours than I do for a pipe of tobacco. May the Lord preserve

him from meeting me—that's the best wish I can give him. However, I can't stay here chattering all day like a one-eyed magpie. Whether Yeri-Hans is strong or weak is nothing to me. Margredel, give me my jacket. I am going to Reethal as arbitrator, to fix the boundary between Hans Aden and old Richter. It's now two o'clock, and the juge de paix will be waiting for me at the mairie."

Margredel, trembling like a leaf, went to get the jacket. Mother Robichon and her son shouldered their pannier and hotte again without saying a word, and uncle left the room as if no one had been there.

For my part I couldn't get over all these battles which Uncle Conrad had just now boasted of for the first time. It appeared that in his youth his ardour for the battle had led him to go distances of twelve or fifteen leagues, even as far as the Vosges Mountains, to challenge strong men, just for the pleasure of the thing; but now age had calmed him down. This is what I said to myself.

The Robichons, mother and son, wished us good day, and went away as they had come.

CHAPTER VI.



UNCLE CONRAD, on returning in the evening, said nothing more about what had happened. He took his supper quietly, and went to bed at an early hour, feeling fatigued.

I wasn't sorry either, after sitting up for two nights playing, to stretch myself on a comfortable bed. But

the next morning towards seven o'clock, as I was still sleeping, uncle awoke me.

"Get up, Kasper," said he, "we are going to Kirschberg to buy a litter of sucking-pigs from Mother Kobus. Her sow farrowed last week. I require six young pigs to put on the beech-mast and acorns; one doesn't get a chance of buying the like every day."

"Sucking-pigs to put on the acorns? You surely don't think of doing that, uncle?" said I. "Six weeks hence would surely be time enough; they would have teeth then; but——"

"I tell you I want these young pigs," replied he in a dry tone. "When one has two cows in full milk and plenty of refuse, they can rear six and even eight suckers, I should think. Besides, I am only going to choose them to-day. Mother Kobus will send them to me in a fortnight or so by Stenger, the carrier. So make haste, dress yourself, and come down."

"Immediately, uncle; only you are wrong to be angry with me. I didn't mean to contradict you."

"It's all right, I am not angry, only make haste."

Then he went downstairs, and whilst I was dressing I thought to myself, "It's rather odd, all the same, that uncle, in place of making butter from the cows' milk and sending fat Orchel to sell it in the market at Ribauville, as usual, wants now to rear young pigs with it. They will make choice meat, certainly." And, thinking in this way, I went down to the large salle. The waggon was already before the door, with the horses harnessed. Uncle Conrad had finished his breakfast.

"Take a drop of wine, Kasper," said he to me, "and put a bit of meat and a piece of bread in your knapsack. You can eat it on the road."

You would have thought it was a matter of life or death.

I saw also that uncle had put on his handsome grey canisole, his best beaver, his brown smallclothes, and woollen stockings, which gave him a very respectable appearance. He had pulled up the collar of his shirt above his ears, and I thought to myself, "Why does he need to be dressed in his Sunday clothes to buy pigs?"

As we were going down the steps, Margredel leaned out of the little window of the kitchen and called after us in her soft, gentle voice—

"You will be back before nightfall?"

"Don't be uneasy," replied uncle, helping me to mount on the truss of straw and taking his seat beside me. "Hi, Fox! Hi, Rappel!"

The waggon started off like the wind.

Uncle Conrad seemed thoughtful. When we were out of the village and galloping along between the two rows of poplars that line the road leading to Kirschberg, he said—

"I am going to buy a litter of pigs. It's a good season. The mast and acorns are ripening fast. I am going to the village of Kirschberg, as Mother Kobus told me a week ago that she had some young pigs to sell. We are going for that purpose. You understand, Kasper?"

"It's not hard to understand that."

"Just so. It's not hard to understand. That's just what I wanted to say. Hi, Fox! Hi, Rappel!"

And he gave the horses a cut with the whip.

Meanwhile I thought to myself, "Uncle Conrad must think me very stupid to explain things to me as if I was a child:—'We are going to buy pigs. It's a good

season. We are going to Mother Kobus's for that purpose, and for no other. You understand, Kasper?"

After a moment or two, he added—

"As for me, I am a man of peace and quietness, a respectable citizen of Eckerswir, going quietly to buy some young pigs in a neighbouring village. But if any one should seek a quarrel with him he will defend himself, naturally."

Then I looked at uncle, and said to myself, "Oh, ho! so this is why we are going to Kirchberg!"

The sight of what he called his peaceable demeanour made my flesh creep. His shoulders were slightly stooped as usual, he was freshly shaved, and had on a clean white shirt, and so far, it is true, he had the appearance of a quiet respectable citizen; but on observing his hooked nose and keen grey eyes, I thought to myself, "Any one that attacks us will find himself very much mistaken; it will be a jolly good surprise to him." And all those stories of my uncle's battles came back to my mind. I couldn't help admiring him to myself, looking, as he did, the picture of an honest respectable country farmer, and a lover of peace. And as we were still galloping on, I said to him—

"Who do you think could want to attack us, Uncle Conrad? There are no robbers in the highways now-a-days."

"I only say *if* any one attacks us. You must acknowledge, Kasper, that it would be very ill done to insult a peaceable man like me, with grey hair, a father of a family, who only asks to pass quietly on his way, would it not?"

"Yes, uncle, it would be very ill done," said I. "Whoever tries it will repent of it."

"As for that, yes; it would be in self-defence, and a man, in that case, must do his best. One can't let himself be sent head over heels without saying a word," continued my uncle with an air of suffering innocence; "it would be rather too convenient that for messieurs the evil-doers. If honest men allow themselves to be ill-used, it would encourage the others in their evil ways, and at length they would think themselves all-powerful on earth because the others said nothing to them. Hi! Rappel!"

I now saw plainly that Uncle Conrad was going to Kirschberg expressly to be challenged by Yeri-Hans, and at first I was afraid of what might happen. I kept trying to think of some means to prevent this terrible encounter, for the tall artilleryman could scarcely fail to make his appearance at the Golden Pitcher when he learned that my uncle was there. Indeed, he was certain to do so, from what Mother Robichon had said. What was to be done? How could I prevail on my uncle to return?

I gave a glance at him now and then with the corner of my eye while thinking in this way. The waggon still galloped on. He looked so calm and collected, and spoke so fair, having withal such a quiet respectable appearance, that I couldn't think how I was to manage it.

As I was puzzling my brain in this way, the idea occurred to me that Uncle Conrad might very possibly get the better of Yeri-Hans, and that then there would be open war between them. In this case the tall artilleryman could never show his face at Eckerswir for very shame, and would never ask Margredel to dance again. This idea inwardly delighted me. Then I

thought that if Uncle Conrad proved the weakest, that would be worse still. He could never endure to see Yeri-Hans again; he would abuse him like a pickpocket, he would forbid Margredel to mention his name before him, and would call him all the names he could think of—ragamuffin, scoundrel, &c. It was a wicked idea, I know, but what could you expect? I was in love with Margredel, and the idea that perhaps the gipsy woman had come with some message from Kirschberg made me very uneasy. I had hated Yeri-Hans like poison ever since Margredel had spoken of him having danced with her seven years before. In short, that's the way the matter stood. I conceal nothing—neither the good nor the bad. That is what I was saying to myself, then, and I thought also that, even if the tall artilleryman failed to come to the Golden Pitcher, uncle would despise him. So that in any case Margredel would never see Yeri-Hans again.

Far from wishing to prevent Uncle Conrad from going to Kirschberg, my only fear now was that he would have good sense enough to return to Eckerswir of himself, either from fear or some other motive.

Already I pictured to myself the tall artilleryman rolling on the ground, and I laughed inwardly at the idea. Such is the way that men's minds change about every moment, according as their interests lead them on one way or the other.

At last, towards eleven o'clock, the village of Kirschberg came into view on the side of the hill, surrounded with its orchards; Father Yeri-Hans's great farm-house, high up next the woods, and the smaller buildings, with their cartsheds, lining the road.

We neared it rapidly. The Green Tree alehouse,

and the straggling houses on the outskirts, separated from each other by lines of dunghills, were soon passed.

Uncle Conrad, at the sight of the Golden Pitcher, at a turn in the street on our left, whipped the horses, and at the same moment the diligence, crowded with conscripts in blue linen blouses and red trousers, passed us with a noise like thunder. It had just left the inn door, the porte-cochère being still open, whilst a number of other conscripts, substitute-agents, and men, women, and several young girls were standing in the road, waving their hands to the departing convoy, who in their turn waved their caps out of all the windows of the diligence. Some were standing on the top, gesticulating frantically, and singing with their mouths wide open from ear to ear, but the rumbling of the diligence prevented their voices from being heard.

It was in the midst of this hubbub that we entered the courtyard of the inn. The stable-boy came forward to take the horses. We got down from the waggon, and uncle, knocking the straw off his clothes, said to me—

“Come along, Kasper, we must have a bottle of rangen before dinner. After that we shall call on Mother Kobus.”

I followed him under the archway, and we entered the large salle, which was crowded with people. Some women were crying, with their aprons to their eyes, others were consoling themselves with a glass of white wine and munching bredstelles. The substitute-agents were gravely smoking their huge porcelain pipes, and Madame Diederich, with her great tulle cap and fat rosy face, was jotting down the reckonings on a slate behind the counter.

At first no one paid any attention to us; but when we had taken our seats near the window, in a corner to the right, Madame Diederich, seeing us, came up with a smiling air to bid Uncle Conrad good day. She asked him why he had not been at the fête, how Miss Margredel was, and if we were all in good health at home, &c. To which uncle replied in the same agreeable manner. Then Madame Diederich withdrew, and I heard several people about us whispering—

“That’s Mr. Stavolo, of Eckerswir, the vinegrower.”

And all along the tables the heads were turning to look at us. Gross, the wine-cooper, who was near the door, said in a husky voice—

“That man yonder is the strongest man in all Eckerswir—Mr. Stavolo; I know him very well. He wouldn’t be afraid of Yeri-Hans, I’ll warrant him.”

Uncle heard him saying this, and I saw by his face that it gratified him greatly.

Then the servant-maid having brought us a bottle of rangen and two glasses on a waiter, my uncle gravely poured out the wine.

“Your health, Kasper,” said he.

“To yours, uncle,” replied I.

A few moments afterwards the waiting-maid brought us some biscuits on a plate, for with persons of distinction, like Uncle Stavolo, it’s not the custom to bring in bread and cheese, but biscuits or macaroons, to do them honour.

Seeing these things, I began to think within myself that Yeri-Hans would never venture to challenge uncle and that, if he came, we should be able to look down on him, since people of consequence, like us, couldn’t be expected to get into grips with every chance comer.

I said to myself also that every one would be against this young man, so that we should actually reap the victory without ever having fought.

Thus, for the second time since morning, I had completely changed my mind, when all at once a tall artilleryman—his little cavalry jacket buttoned up to the chin and tightened in about the waist like a young girl's bodice, his pointed kepi, with turned-up peak, over one ear, and his grey linen trousers, cut very wide, with sunburned complexion, blue eyes, straight nose, large sandy-coloured moustaches, projecting ears—in short, a tall strapping fellow nearly six feet high, as solid as an oak—passed in front of the windows carrying a little hazel stick in his hand, which he twirled now and then with a knowing air, and followed by Gross, the wine-cooper, with his hands stuck in the pockets of his apron.

The next minute the door opened, and this man, without entering, put his head inside, looking up and down the room. Then he mounted the three steps, his hand brought up to his right ear in military style, and said—

“My service to you all!”

All the young men instantly called out—

“Yeri! hey! Yeri! This way! A glass here!”

He laughed good-humouredly, and walked along the line of tables, shaking hands right and left, and clapping the old people gently on the shoulder who were crying, saying to them—

“Come, come, Father Franz—come, Father Jacob! Don't take on this way! Keep up your heart! What the deuce! He will come back to you again. You see I came back—didn't I?”

At which the old folks shook their heads without replying, or else, hiding their faces in their wrinkled hands, murmured in a choking voice—

“Leave me alone, Yeri; leave me alone.”

It was plain, however, that this Yeri-Hans was a good-natured fellow; I couldn't deny it; but that only vexed me the more. I would have liked to be able to think him an ill-hearted scoundrel, and that Margredel when she saw him would hate the sight of him.

Uncle Conrad pretended to be lost in thought. He took out his pipe, and filled it slowly; then, in place of lighting it, he put it back again into his pocket, and said to me—

“What lovely weather we are getting now, Kasper!”

“Yes, uncle, very fine.”

“The grapes will be gaining up to the end of the month.”

“There's no doubt of that. They are gaining every day.”

“We shall have a hundred pipes at least this year.”

“It's quite possible, Uncle Conrad, and of good quality, too.”

“Yes, Kasper, it will equal that of 1822. It was a good little mild-flavoured wine, and sold at thirty-five francs the pipe three years afterwards.”

All the time my uncle was saying this he pretended to be looking at Martine, the blacksmith, on the opposite side of the street, shoeing a horse, with the hoof resting on his apron. I would fain have done so too, but I couldn't take my eyes off Yeri-Hans, who, on his side, did not appear to see us. At last Gross touched him on the shoulder, as I could see quite plainly; he did not turn round immediately, however, but went

on talking and laughing for a short time with a young girl who seemed much taken with him; then, swaying himself to and fro with a self-satisfied air, he turned gently on his heel and looked over in our direction.

Uncle Conrad, with his elbow on the table and his head leaning on his hand, sat with his back towards him, looking out, but in about a minute, having taken up his glass to drink, he turned round towards the salle, and Yeri-Hans made as if he recognised him.

"Hallo!" cried he, "surely I can't be mistaken; that is Mr. Stavolo, of Eckerswir."

He came up to us with his hand to his cap, and uncle, who still remained seated with his head thrown back, replied, pretending to be surprised—

"It's quite true my name is Stavolo, of Eckerswir, but your face I can't remember."

"What!" said the other, "you don't remember little Yeri-Hans, the son of Father Yeri?"

"Ah! So it's you, Yeri?" said uncle, with a forced laugh. "Well, well! And so you are back from your regiment again. Well, I am glad to see you."

"Yes, Mr. Stavolo, it will be a fortnight to-morrow since I returned," said the artilleryman. "You have perhaps heard of me since my arrival?"

"Good gracious, no," said uncle; "people who are nine or ten miles distant don't get news of each other every day. I thought you were still in Africa."

Yeri-Hans at this didn't well know what to say. For a moment he glanced at me with the corner of his eye, and then in a good-humoured tone—

"Why, Mr. Stavolo," said he, "the way of it is this. We have been squeezing each other's ribs a little

here during the fête, and by my faith I thought—he! he! he!—that Diemer, the woodcutter, Polak, the charcoal-burner, and three or four others of your old acquaintances would have been giving you some news of me.”

“What news?”

“Why, I put them all under the table.”

“Oh, ho!” said uncle, “then you are the strongest of the strong, Yeri? You have brought back all sorts of tricks from the wars, eh? Bless my stars! To think of that! Why, no one dare look crooked at you now, I suppose? You are, as one may say, on the very pinnacle of glory!”

He said this with such a droll air that you could scarcely tell whether he was serious or not. Several people along the table even turned away their heads to hide a smile.

The artilleryman, in spite of his sunburned complexion, turned quite red, and it was only after a minute or so that he answered—

“Yes, so it is, Mr. Stavolo; I laid them all on their backs, and, please God, it won’t be the last.”

Then uncle’s cheeks quivered, and as he was about to reply, Yeri-Hans said—

“I ask your pardon, my glass is yonder.”

“No offence,” replied my uncle in a dry tone.

Yeri-Hans took his seat opposite us at the other table amongst three or four of his companions, who had kept his glass for him.

“Your health, Mr. Stavolo,” cried he with a knowing wink.

“Yours in return, Yeri-Hans,” replied my uncle.

They continued to address each other in this way

from the opposite tables, raising their voices. All the salle was listening. I wished myself anywhere else, and repented heartily that I had come. Uncle, on his side, seemed to have grown twenty years younger, he sat so erect, and his grey eyes sparkled so brightly. Outwardly, however, he was quite calm, only his large hooked nose curved more fiercely, and his grey hair seemed to bristle up round his ears.

"So, Mr. Stavolo," cried the artilleryman, laughing, "you heard nothing whatever about the fête? It's quite surprising."

"Why is it surprising?"

"Why, I should have thought that an old champion like you, who, people tell us, were once so terrible in battle, would scarcely have had your blood so chilled by age as to take no interest in such things. I should have thought they would have roused you up, as we see an old cavalry charger pricking up his ears and neighing when he hears the trumpet call. Well, well! Old age—old age!"

Uncle had by this time turned quite pale, but he still endeavoured to restrain himself, and replied:—

"Horses are only beasts after all, Yeri-Hans. Man learns sense as he grows in years. You don't know that yet, my lad, but you will learn it by-and-by. It's in the nature of youth to fight when the whim seizes them, be it right or wrong. Men well up in years, like me, don't show themselves often, but when they do, people see that old blood is like old wine—it doesn't sparkle so much, but it warms."

As he said this Uncle Conrad had something really noble in his face and expression, and I heard the old folks all through the room saying among themselves—

"That's what you may call speaking in the right way."

The tall artilleryman himself, for a moment, seemed to look on uncle with respect, then he said—

"For all that, I should have liked to see you at the fête, Mr. Stavolo. Although you don't enter the lists now, you might have given your opinion of the combatants."

"All that," rejoined uncle, "is as much as to say I am old, isn't it? That I am no longer good for anything but to sit in the ring and scream like the women—'Good gracious! they'll hurt each other—separate them!' Well, you are quite mistaken. Look me well in the face, Yeri; when I make my appearance it will be to show you your master."

"Oh! ho!"

"Yes, boy, your master; for it would provoke any one to hear a man openly boasting of himself as you have done. But to-day I have come here merely to buy some young pigs from Mother Kobus."

"Young pigs!" cried Yeri-Hans, bursting into a loud laugh.

Then uncle rose, as pale as death, shouting in a terrible voice—

"Yes, young pigs, brawler! But I won't let any one tread on my corns, old as I am. Get up to your feet, then, get up I say, since you came here only for that purpose, since you challenge me in this way!" Then, in a graver tone, looking round the room—"Is it likely that a man of my age, out of vanity or love of fighting, or any such thing, should have come one errand to Kirschberg? It's not possible; there's no one but a fool who would do it. I came here on my private

business, my nephew can tell you. But you all see that this young man mocks my grey hairs. Well, let him come on, let him try if he can throw me !”

“This is much better than words,” cried Yeri-Hans. “For my part I am for those who come on boldly, and I leave it for the women to talk afterwards.”

He left his place, and already every one was arranging the tables and benches against the walls, saying—

“This will be a real battle—a terrible battle. Father Stavolo is still strong; Yeri-Hans will have trouble with him.”

Uncle Conrad and Yeri, thus left alone in the middle of the salle, waited till everything was in order. Madame Diederich and the servant-maids had taken refuge in the kitchen, and one could see them huddled together in the doorway, looking over each other’s shoulders.

As for me, I no longer knew what to think. I was standing in a corner of the window, looking at the artilleryman, who appeared to me then to be taller and stronger than before, and thinking to myself that, with his great tawny-coloured moustache, he had the countenance of a lion—a lion exulting in his strength, and sure beforehand of victory and conquest. This thought made me shiver. Then when I looked at Uncle Conrad, broad, thick-set, square-built, with rounded back, and arms as thick as other men’s legs, the nose curving like an iron clamp, and his straight hair falling over his forehead till it met the eyebrows, I took courage again, and fancied that, after all, he might prove the strongest. But at the same time I felt as if a stream of cold water was running down my back, and the noise of all these tables being moved back, and the dragging of the

benches along the floor, seemed to rasp, as it were, against my legs. I looked round for some place to sit down, but there were no chairs to be seen; the large salle was completely cleared, and the guests were all mounted on the tables, with their heads close to the ceiling, waiting anxiously. Yeri-Hans unbuttoned his jacket, and handed his cap to a bystander to hold.

"Catch, Kasper!" cried uncle, throwing me his beaver, which fell on the floor.

This appeared to me a bad omen, but he paid no attention, and tucking up the sleeves of his jacket, as he was in the habit of doing when working amongst the vines—

"Let no one tell me afterwards," said he again, "that I challenged this young man. It was Yeri who defied me."

"Yes, yes, I take it all on my own shoulders," cried the artilleryman, laughing.

"You hear him?" exclaimed my uncle. "Well, then, by the grace of God!"

At the same time he squared his shoulders, his left leg in advance, and asked—

"Are you ready, Yeri?"

"Yes, Mr. Stavolo."

Then they caught each other by the collar of the coat, after the manner of Alsace, without touching the body. Their coats must have been of good stout cloth, for at the start Uncle Conrad lifted Yeri-Hans from the ground by main force and held him in this way for a moment as if about to dash him against the wall, but the next instant it was his turn to be lifted up in the same manner. Both fell straight on their feet again. You could have heard a pin drop in the salle.

"You have pretty stout arms," said uncle; "I must admit it—he! he! he!"

"And you also, Mr. Stavolo," said the artilleryman.

The next instant uncle pushed him back with all his strength, his arms thrust forward and his head down, like a bull charging with his horns, endeavouring at the same time to lift him off the ground; but Yeri-Hans, leaning towards him, slid along on his feet the whole length of the room, his boots rasping on the boards with the sound of a jack-plane, and no sooner had uncle stopped pushing him, than, giving a savage cry of "It's my turn now!" he pushed uncle back in his turn in the same manner, but without being able to throw him. Then both paused and looked each other full in the face, and every one present drew a long breath. You could see the marks of the nails of their shoes on the floor. Uncle Conrad was quite pale, whilst the artilleryman was as red as a brick. They let go each other for a moment, and Yeri-Hans said in an angry tone—

"Oh, very good!"

"Are you tired already?" said uncle.

"Tired! Tired, did you say?"

And at the same instant he caught Uncle Conrad by the collar again, shaking him, as if about to try some other manœuvre. Uncle had also caught him in like manner. They stood thus watching each other for more than a minute, and laughing in a strange way. Then all at once Yeri drew uncle towards him with such force that he was obliged to lean backwards in order to resist him, and as he was bending back in this manner, the other, giving a hoarse cry from the very bottom of his chest, threw himself on him so suddenly

that uncle, not expecting anything of the sort, was thrown on the broad of his back on the floor, with his two legs in the air.

Shouts of triumph rose on all sides, and Yeri-Hans rubbed his hands and puffed out his cheeks to the cars. He had had a hard struggle, for his eyes were as red as blood.

Uncle, with his lips pale and trembling, rose from the ground; but scarcely was he on his feet again, in order to renew the battle more fiercely than ever, than his leg bent under him, and he was obliged to lean against a table for support. Instantly there was deep silence in the salle, and Yeri asked—

“What is the matter with you, Mr. Stavolo? Do you feel ill?”

“Go to the devil with you, you scoundrel!” cried uncle. “You have broken my leg. Oh, the villain! He took me like a traitor, and here I am with a broken leg!”

Hearing that, I exclaimed—

“Good God! my uncle is lamed for life! A doctor—quick!”

And Yeri-Hans, putting on his cap, said—

“I am very sorry, Mr. Stavolo, very sorry indeed. But you are wrong to be angry with me. I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“Oh, the scoundrel!” cried uncle, whom they had seated on a chair, and who was grinding his teeth with pain while they were pulling off his shoe. “He has broken my leg with his infernal tricks, and now he has the impudence to say he didn’t do it on purpose. You will answer to me for this, Yeri; you will answer for it dearly!”

"Yes, Mr. Stavolo, whenever you like," said Yeri-Hans. "But you are wrong to cry out so. I give you my word of honour, I am very sorry for what has happened."

Every one saw that he spoke the truth, but uncle, who thought he should have come off victorious, wouldn't listen to what he said.

"Begone with you! begone!" said he. "It stirs my blood even to see you! Oh, the villain! To lame a man of my age!"

Then Yeri-Hans left the room, looking very down-cast, and when they had taken off Uncle Conrad's shoe and stocking, Summer, the pork-butcher of the village, kneeled down before the chair and began to feel the leg from top to bottom. All the people stood round looking at him. Uncle's anger had soon passed off, and he was muttering in a broken voice—

"To think that I am to be a cripple for the rest of my days, and all through that rascal's fault! Oh! what an unlucky idea it was in me to come to Kirschberg to buy those pigs! Oh, the scoundrel! I who was drinking there quietly, without thinking of anything! And even then I would think nothing of it if it wasn't one of his regimental tricks, which he has brought back from Africa, to lame honest folks in this way!"

Old Summer, with his cotton cap and white apron, was still feeling the leg, and at last he said—

"Of broken bones I find none, but a severe strain."

"A strain?" said uncle.

"Yes, and worse than a broken bone, too, Mr. Stavolo. You must put your leg into a bucket of cold water at once, for if you wait any length of time you might have to get the leg cut off."

Then uncle looked at me with such a pale, frightened face, that I felt the tears come into my eyes. He tried to speak, but he could only say—

“Water, Kasper! Some water—quick!”

I ran to the kitchen, where Zeffen, the servant-maid, was busy pumping a bucket of water. I brought it into the *salle* myself, and uncle put his foot and leg into it, shivering, for it was a spring out of the rock, and as cold as ice.

Madame Diederich then said—

“I can’t tell you, Mr. Stavolo, how vexed I am that such an unfortunate accident should have happened in my house.”

“I’m a good deal more vexed than you, I can tell you!” cried uncle angrily.

“You will sleep here, I suppose?”

“I sleep at Kirschberg?—never! I shan’t remain here more than a quarter of an hour. You won’t see me in in this beggarly country again in a hurry. God preserve me from buying young pigs in any such place!”

All the guests of the inn went off one by one to spread the wonderful news, and in a quarter of an hour there was no one left in the *salle* but Uncle Conrad, Summer, the servant-women, and myself, for Madame Diederich had also gone out to tell the man to put the horses in the waggon.

“Mr. Stavolo, you would do well to remain here,” said Summer; “it will be dangerous for you to travel to-day.”

“I don’t care for that. I have a perfect hatred to this place.”

“Then you are decided?”

“Yes.”

"Well, we had better take the leg out of the bucket, and wrap a wet linen cloth about it. That will do almost as well until you reach home."

He looked at the leg, and said again—

"Yes, it's a severe sprain."

He wrapped the linen cloth about it, which Madame Diederich had just brought, and, having passed some water over this, we carried uncle in an arm-chair to the waggon. We placed him at the bottom with his leg supported on a truss of straw, and I took the reins.

All the village was at the windows to see us pass. Madame Diederich said nothing about her bill, and Father Summer called after us as we were leaving—

"I shall call to see you one of these fine mornings, Mr. Stavolo, and hear how you are getting on."

"Very good, very good," said uncle, his teeth chattering, for he was cold. "Make haste, Kasper."

We passed through the village at full gallop. Uncle felt mortified to see so many people at the doors and windows, and exclaimed—

"What a stupid set these people of Kirschberg are! You would think they never saw a sprain before! Any one may chance to make a slip."

At length, when we were outside the village, on the open road, he calmed down all at once and said no more. The anger he felt at his defeat had made him sulky, and, as it were, savage. Meanwhile I whipped the horses on briskly, saying to myself that even this misfortune had its good side, since Margredel would certainly curse Yeri-Hans in her heart, and uncle would be sure to fly in a terrible passion whenever any one mentioned his name in his hearing.

While still thinking in this way, we reached

Eckerswir, about three o'clock in the afternoon. Uncle looked to the right and left with an uneasy air, fearing to meet Father Brêmer, Meriâne, or any other of those we were in the habit of seeing at the Three Roses of an evening, and who would not have failed to salute us, or even stop us to ask about our journey, especially when they saw Uncle Conrad in the back part of the waggon, and me seated in front, driving. Fortunately nothing of this kind took place. We came close up to the house at a gentle trot, without having met any one we knew. But scarcely had we stopped, when Margredel looked out of one of the windows of the sitting-room, and appeared quite astonished to see us back so soon. Then, perceiving Uncle Conrad with his leg propped up in the straw, she dropped her work and ran out on the door-step, exclaiming—

“What has happened? What is the matter with you, dear father?”

“Nothing, Margredel,” replied uncle; “nothing worth speaking of; I slipped.”

“Slipped! Good heavens! where?”

“In the auberge of the Golden Pitcher; I have got a slight sprain, that’s all.”

Margredel saw plainly by our faces that the matter was more serious than he represented; so, without waiting to hear more, she began to scream out—

“Orchel! Orchel! run as fast as you can go for Mr. Lehmann!”

She ran down the steps, and climbed into the waggon, exclaiming in such a tender voice—“My poor father! my poor dear father!” and embracing and kissing him so, that I would willingly have been in his place sprain and all.

He seemed a good deal affected, and said—

“It’s nothing, Margredel; it’s not dangerous; only I can’t get down out of the waggon myself; you must send for old Roemer and that tall fellow Hirsch to help me.”

Already several of the neighbours had rushed out of their houses on hearing Margredel’s cries. Some caught uncle under the arms and others under the legs, and carried him in this way feet foremost to the top of the steps.

Margredel was crying as if her heart would break. Orchel had gone, and meantime uncle was lying on the bed, with the windows open, and surrounded by half the goodwives of the village, all speaking together, and saying that the white of eggs, chopped onions with parsley, or almond oil mixed with pepper, was the best thing in the world for a sprain, so that one didn’t know which to choose of all these remedies, when Dr. Lehmann entered, saying—

“In the first place I must have the room cleared; I can’t have all these magpies chattering about me.”

Then approaching Uncle Conrad, who gazed at him with wide-open eyes—

“Well, Mr. Stavolo,” said he, shaking him by the hand, “what the deuce is all this about?”

“I slipped,” said uncle; “I slipped in the salle of the Golden Pitcher, at Kirschberg, and put my ankle out of joint, I think.”

“Let me have a look at it,” said Lehmann. “Come this way, Kasper, and perhaps Miss Margredel would be good enough to see how matters are going on in the next room.”

After which he set to work to undo the bandages from the leg, looked at it, and said—

"It's neither more nor less than a good smart sprain. How the deuce, Father Stavolo, did a strong man like you, in a room, on a smooth floor, contrive to get such a sprain as this, a sprain too from front to back, for you must have slipped backwards suddenly, that's quite plain? Was there nothing to keep you up?"

"It was done," said uncle, after ruminating for a few seconds, "by a treacherous attack."

Dr. Lehmann drew himself up suddenly to his full height, saying —

"How! A treacherous attack?"

"Yes, Mr. Lehmann, it's the simple truth. Kasper there will tell you."

Then he related how he had set out in the morning with the intention of buying some young pigs at Kirschberg, from Mother Kobus, and how Yeri-Hans had attacked him unexpectedly in the salle of the Golden Pitcher, and how he had slipped on a plum-stone, which was doubtless the cause of his sprain.

"Ah! very good, now I understand," said the doctor, laughing a little. "We wished to try our strength, Father Stavolo; but that doesn't always succeed. You have had the upper hand for a long time, and——"

"No, no," cried uncle, quite ashamed, "Kasper there can tell you that Yeri-Hans took me by surprise, in the most treacherous manner, and that only for the plum-stone—— Isn't it so, Kasper?"

I had seen nothing of all this, but Uncle Conrad seemed to me unhappy enough already with his sprain, without me contradicting him into the bargain.

"It's as clear as the noon-day," said I. "The artilleryman at first pulled you towards him to give you

the leg, and then pushed you backwards, and you stepped on the plum-stone."

"Yes, he wanted to give me the leg—the scoundrel! but if the plum-stone hadn't happened to be there——"

"Well, well, no matter about that now," said Lehmann. "The sprain is a smart one, I can tell you, and may keep you on your back for six weeks if you commit the smallest imprudence. You did well to put the foot in cold water, only your bandages are not worth a straw."

Then he bound uncle's foot and ankle so carefully and well that he could have walked on it with ease, but he enjoined on him not to use it in any way, and to wet the linen as often as possible.

That done, the doctor went away as he had come, saying he would return the following day.

Uncle Stavolo was in consternation to find that Lehmann had discovered the truth at the very start. For this reason, when we were alone, he said to me—

"These doctors are not worth rope enough to hang them. You may tell them the truth fifty times over, and they won't believe you. Since this is the way, I won't say anything at all. When any one asks me how the thing happened, I shall say—'Ask Kasper; he knows well that it was by a treacherous trick I was thrown. He saw everything—the crook of the leg, and the plum-stone!' But it isn't suitable that I should say so myself; it would look as if I wished to excuse myself, to defend myself with my tongue; that wouldn't do at all. Kasper, you must tell the simple truth, as you did to Lehmann, mind! And now leave me alone! I have been vexed and worried about this matter, and would like to sleep."


I left the room, and finding Margredel crying near the window, with her pretty face buried in her hands, I told her that Yeri-Hans was the cause of all that had happened, that he had attacked her father, that he had challenged him, and at last had thrown him by a treacherous trick.

She made no reply, and continued to sob bitterly.

At supper-time she took her plate and went into her father's room to watch by him, and I had to eat my supper alone, thinking that Margredel was not nearly angry enough with Yeri-Hans, and that in her place I would have cursed him a thousand and a thousand times.



CHAPTER VII

HE news of these events having spread through the country round, Uncle Conrad's fame was singularly lessened. Nothing was talked of but Yeri-Hans. Every one praised his extraordinary strength, and asserted that all the others were a mere nothing beside him.

About the same period Uncle Conrad made a number of profound reflections on the vanity of human affairs. He lay there pondering and thinking from morning till night, and often when I was sitting beside his bed he would begin to say—

“Kasper, the more I think, the more clearly I see that men are fools to moil and toil as they do. Now what is glory? I just ask you. I remember our old curate, Jeronimus, used always to be crying out, ‘Glory

is nothing but an empty vapour.' While you are young and strong, you have glory because others are afraid of you, and, although they may hate you, they daren't say so to your face; but when you grow old, or when you chance to slip, say on a plum-stone, your glory is gone in a moment. And as regards money it's the same thing. What's the good of property when you can't make any use of it! Look at me, for example, Kasper, of what use is it to me to have fifteen acres of vines, when I can't go and see them? Of what use is it to have plenty of old wine in my cellar, when Lehmann won't allow me to drink it for fear of inflaming my sprain? Of what use are all my possessions to me now? I would rather have only the half and be able to enjoy them! In other things it's just the same, for once on a time I had a good wife that I loved, and would have been happy to spend my whole life with her; all my possessions would have given me a hundred times as much pleasure if I could have shared them with Christine. But it's only lost time speaking of her, since she is dead! Do we even know if she is thinking about us now, or if she sees what is going on at Eckerswir? I believe it, but I am not sure. And then there's my daughter, Margrethel! I have reared her, I have danced her on my knees, I have watched her growing up—it was my happiness and delight. Well! here she is now one-and-twenty. Suppose you were not there, Kasper, another would come and would take a fancy to her, and I should even have to give him money to induce him to take her as his wife. Isn't all that abominable, to rear up a daughter for fellows that don't know Adam from Eve, and who think they are doing you a great honour by allowing you to grease their paws? I maintain, for

my part, that all is vanity, and if it were not for our holy religion, which promises us the life eternal, it would be far better never to have come into the world!"

So spoke uncle on account of his sprain. Never was a more reasonable man seen, and I said to him—

"You are quite right, uncle; only one must do like other folks, and get married, since it's the custom in Alsace. When you are well again you will think quite differently; you will go and see your vines, and drink a glass of old Kütterlé now and then, as you used to do. As for myself, you know me, and if I have the good fortune to please Margredel, we will all live together, and be as happy as the day is long."

Uncle now refused to see any one except ourselves. Old Brêmer and Father Meriâne had called once or twice, but he gave orders that they should not be admitted.

What annoyed him above all things was to hear Yeri-Hans spoken of. Every time his name was mentioned he changed colour and stammered out—

"Oh! the scoundrel—if I ever chance to meet him at some quiet corner of the road!"

Margredel having attempted one day to say a few words in the artilleryman's favour, on the pretext that he was not the cause of the sprain, but the plum-stone, he turned quite pale, and said in a smothered voice—

"Hold your tongue, Margredel; not a word more if you want to put an end to me at once, you have only to take that rascal's part."

I then saw that Margredel was in love with Yeri-Hans, and I blessed God for what had happened, saying within myself—

"It is Providence that has ordered this thing in His

wisdom, in order that Uncle Conrad and the artilleryman should be at enmity with each other !”

And whilst uncle thought everything was going badly, I, for my part, thought everything was going well.

Meanwhile Margredel seemed out of spirits. She never sang now in the kitchen, or laughed at meals. She was always thinking, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

“ Ah !” said I to myself, when looking at her coming and going in this restless way, “ now I know why the gipsy woman came here ; now I know, Margredel, why you blushed that day when I asked you what that old woman came to the house for ; now I know why you remembered so well the tall, fair-complexioned young man who asked you to dance once on a time at Kirschberg. Now I know why you look sad. But it’s all of no use, Margredel ; Yeri-Hans will never set foot within Father Conrad Stavolo’s threshold. No, no ; it’s all over, Margredel, you must turn your thoughts to another good fellow, who loves you dearly. This tall artilleryman is a scoundrel ; why persist in thinking of him ?”

I was sorry for her inwardly, and yet at the same time I felt happy. I said to myself—

“ When Margredel has moped about in this way for a time, she will forget the other, and then I shall be here to console her. We shall get married, and all will be well again. And even, perhaps, at some future day, five, seven, or ten years hence, when we have a flock of little children about us, and are sitting quietly opposite each other some evening at the fireside, I will ask her suddenly, ‘ I say, Margredel, isn’t it true that once on a time you were thinking of Yeri-Hans, of Kirschberg ?

Come, tell it out boldly ; you have no cause to keep it secret.' Then she will blush, and at last she will answer, ' How can you say such things, Kasper ? Such an idea never once entered my head.' "

And, fancying all that to myself, the tears came into my eyes, and I blessed God that Uncle Conrad had formed the idea of trying his strength in the wrestling match, seeing it was likely to advance my marriage with Margredel.

This state of matters went on for weeks. From time to time uncle sent me out to the vineyard to see if the grapes were getting ripe, and at last I was able to bring him a few bunches, which he ate ; but he would have liked to be out himself, to see the vines with his own eyes, to prepare his hogsheads, and hire the people for the vintage. You can't imagine his distress, therefore, at having to lie there all day without moving, nor all the names he called the man who had put him in this state.

Dr. Lehmann, with his long yellow velvet coat, and his grey cap with turned-up peak, his hands buried up to the elbows in his pockets, and his long spindle legs thrust into his half-boots of reddish leather, came every morning to visit him.

" It's doing very nicely," he would say, after taking off the bandage. " A little more patience, Father Stavolo. Your ankle is getting stronger. The swelling is going down. In a few days you will be able to go about with a stick."

" In a few days !" cried my uncle. " Is this thing never to have an end ?"

" Why, what can you expect ? A sprain requires patience. I know very well how tiresome it is to lie

stretched there on your back, thinking that the fine weather is going past, that the vines are getting on, that the grapes are ripening, that the wine-casks ought to be sulphured, the stands put up, the cellar swept out, and the presser cleaned and oiled. I know all that, but what is to be done? You may consider yourself lucky, after all, Master Conrad."

"How! Lucky?"

"Without doubt. The same thing might have happened to you in the very middle of the vintage, in which case you would have had to leave the care of everything to others. And then the sprain might have been much more severe. In short, you are getting off very safe. Only you must have patience, Mr. Stavolo."

Then, stroking his long, pointed, reddish beard, and smiling to himself, he passed into the large sitting-room, where he always stopped for a minute to talk to Margredel, who was sewing at the window.

"Well, Margredel, well! Still as handsome and fresh as a little rosebud, I see! he! he! he!"

"Oh! Mr. Lehmann, you are always saying civil things to people."

"Not at all, not at all; I always tell the truth—I say what I think. Kasper's a lucky dog; I only wish I were in his place."

Margredel blushed, and, laughing, he shook me by the hand and walked off.

This is the way matters went on every day.

Uncle's patience was almost at an end, when one fine morning the doctor, after examining the ankle, said—

"This time, Mr. Stavolo, you are all right. You may get up and walk about a little with the assistance of a stick."

Uncle's countenance cleared up.

"Then the leg is well?" said he.

"Yes; it only requires a little exercise to strengthen the muscles."

Then the doctor rose, and said, laughing—

"Only, Father Stavolo, remember you must take care. There are so many plum-stones in the world! You had better not put your foot on any of them again, or it might be worse than the first time."

Uncle, at this mention of the plum-stone, turned quite red.

"Very good," said he, "but the plum-stones don't always trip the same people!"

"No, Father Stavolo, but we shouldn't be on the look-out for them, for all that; we might happen to meet them rather oftener than we would like. Well, good-bye; I hope it will be a considerable time before you want my services again."

And upon this the doctor went out, laughing, and Uncle Stavolo, sitting up in bed, exclaimed—

"That tall Lehmann is a tiresome fool with his plum-stones. It seems as if he thought that Yeri-Hans threw me without a plum-stone at all. I can't endure people who make fun of everything."

"Never mind," said I, "he has made your leg all right again, and what does the rest matter to you?"

"Yes, but I didn't send for him to talk to me about plum-stones."

Notwithstanding his ill-humour, Uncle Conrad rose, dressed himself, and without paying any attention to the doctor's instructions, he went out the same day in the afternoon to visit his vines. He returned in the evening very much pleased, and said to us—

"I got on right well; the one leg is quite as strong as the other. Well, after all, I might have fared worse than get a sprained ankle. We won't think about that any more. The vines look well; we shall have a good year. That's the principal thing."

I felt very happy to see Uncle Conrad as strong as ever again.

From this time until eight days before the vintage, close upon St. Jerome's Day, the patron saint of Eckerswir, uncle never mentioned Yeri-Hans' name, and busied himself entirely with his vines, his cellar, and his wine-press.

Meanwhile I went out frequently with Waldhorn. I was earning money pretty fast, and said to myself—"Another couple of hundred crowns, and I shall have my two arpents of vines, and Margredel will be mine."

It was my only happiness to dream of that. When tramping along the roads, and listening to the song of the larks, it seemed to me as if it was the music of my wedding-day. I never returned from any of my rounds without bringing something to Margredel—a ribbon, a pair of earrings—in short, the handsomest thing I could get. She received all these things pleasantly enough, but not at all with the same delight that she used to do. She never smiled now, she never thanked me, and it seemed as if she was saying to herself: "It's a matter of course for him to buy me these things since he looks on me as his property!"

This difference in her manner vexed me greatly, but I consoled myself by thinking that Uncle Conrad would never forgive Yeri-Hans, and that, once married to Margredel, she would forget the other, and be a good little wife to me.

CHAPTER VIII.



OW, five or six days before the fête of Eckerswir, one very hot morning, I was playing an air on the clarionet in the large sitting-room, with my music propped up against the wall between the two open windows, Uncle Conrad was cutting wood outside at the foot of the door-steps, and I heard Margredel washing up the plates in the kitchen. This went on for about half-an-hour, when at last uncle came in in his shirt-sleeves, and began to walk up and down, seemingly in a brown study. As I went on with my music, all at once, putting his hand on my shoulder, he said to me—

“That’s a pretty tune you are playing, Kasper, but leave your music for a little and let us have a talk. What is this the people are saying about me in the village?”

Then, laying down my clarionet, I turned round in my chair.

“Why, uncle,” replied I, “how should I know what the people are saying? You know very well that I have not been at the Three Roses since you got your sprain.”

“Well,” said he, “every one is saying that they are rejoiced to see that Yeri-Hans missed breaking my leg.”

“Why, how can you take such ideas into your head?”

“Oh, very good, you don’t want to hurt my feelings; but I don’t care a straw for the whole village. In the first place, only for that plum-stone that caused me to

slip, Yeri-Hans would have got something to make him remember me. Notwithstanding that, I was wrong to cry out against him as I did. When a man plays and loses he should pay and hold his tongue. In short, that plum-stone made me lose my temper. If Yeri had thrown me by fair force I would have thought it quite natural and right; but to fall in that way, owing to the fault of a plum-stone, is too much, especially as I was very near breaking a leg."

"No doubt," replied I. "But what is done is done. Let us say no more about it."

"No, there's no use in saying anything more about it, Kasper; but things can't remain in this way."

I saw at once that he was thinking of having his revenge, and the thought of Yeri-Hans coming back and Margredel's joy passed before my eyes like a flash of lightning.

"What matters it to you, uncle, to pass for the strongest man in the whole country?" cried I. "What does it bring you in? Not a liard. On the contrary, it only rouses the folks' envy and hatred against you. They would be glad to see every bone in your body broken. They don't pity you in the least when you meet any mishap; they say you are well served!"

"Oh! so they say that, do they?" replied Uncle Conrad. "That is just what I wanted to know. Now that my leg, thank goodness, is well, I must see this tall artilleryman again."

"What, uncle! you, such a quiet, reasonable man!"

"You may talk about reason till you are tired, Kasper. Is it because a man is reasonable that he is to take blows without giving them back? No; all that may do very well for a clarionet player, but it doesn't

suit me at all. Get up, nephew, and come here till I show you something."

He caught me by the button of the coat, and led me into the middle of the room, saying—

"Here is the fête of Eckerswir coming on in five days from this time. I have no fancy for wrestling in the salle of an inn, with the floor covered with plum-stones, morsels of bread, bits of cheese, and other slippery things. Well, a man couldn't have a better opportunity for trying a fall than in the open square, and that's what I shall do. I have discovered a plan for laying this artilleryman on his back. See, Kasper, take a good grip of me here; I'll show you how it's done. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"You have a good hold of me?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Well, look!"

At the same moment he caught my left arm by the elbow, slipped his shoulder under it, and before I knew what I was about I felt my legs whirling up in the air, and I fell my whole length on the floor, with such force that I thought my back was broken. I was so much astonished that I lay for more than half a minute with my mouth wide open, without being able to speak or take breath.

"Well!" cried my uncle, quite proud at his success, "do you see it now, nephew?"

"Yes, I see it," said I, rising; "it's very good—but you might have explained it to me in another way."

"You wouldn't have understood it so well, Kasper," replied he. "That's the way I mean to take with Yeri Hans; only we must endeavour to bring him here, and

that won't be so easy. You must go back to Kirschberg yourself, and ask him, from me, to dine with us next Sunday at the fête."

"Oh! as for that, I tell you plainly I will not," cried I, fairly driven beyond patience. "I have never contradicted you, I have always done whatever you wished, but to bring Yeri-Hans here myself, never! never!"

"Well, well, Kasper," said uncle, "calm yourself; I will send Nickel."

And as I was going to reply, he added—

"No matter what you say or don't say, it will be all the same. I must have Yeri-Hans here: I must see him with his legs in the air as he has seen me."

In this extremity I saw there was only one resource to escape the serious danger that threatened us.

"Uncle Conrad," said I, "you are wrong. Let us consult Margredel; you will see that she thinks as I do."

And without waiting for his reply—

"Margredel!" cried I, opening the door of the kitchen, "listen: do you know that your father wants to have another match with Yeri-Hans? That he wants to bring him here to exterminate him?"

I naturally thought she would have cried out and raised her hands to heaven, and besought her father to stay quietly at home; for the more she loved Yeri and Uncle Conrad, the more anxious, of course, she would be to prevent them fighting. But see what it is to trust in women! Margredel for quick hearing had not her equal anywhere, and I fancy she must have been behind the door all the time; for when she came in she listened to her father calmly, with her apron over her arm, and

without seeming in any way moved. Uncle Conrad began to tell her that it would be the greatest disgrace if he didn't get the better of Yeri-Hans, that the Stavolos would be despised and scoffed at, that they durstn't show themselves at the Three Roses, or anywhere else, &c.

During this discourse Margredel kept her eyes fixed on the ground like a simpleton, and when he had ended—

"You are quite right, father," said she softly; "I can't contradict you; but Yeri-Hans will never venture to come, for he knows right well that you slipped on a plum-stone, and he won't dare to come to grips with you in the public square. I am as sure as I am living of it—you will see."

"Well, if he doesn't come," cried uncle, "the shame will fall on him."

And turning to me—

"You see, Kasper," said he, with a triumphant air, "that Margredel has more sense than you. She knows right well what's suitable; she sees that I am in the right. Go now and finish your music, and I'll tell Nickel to take his stick and set out for Kirschberg."

He left the room, the innocent Margredel returned to the kitchen, and I stood there so thunderstruck at what had happened that I could scarcely believe my ears. For several minutes I could do nothing but picture to myself Yeri-Hans making his appearance at Eckerswir in triumph, as proud as a peacock, his arm akimbo, smiling at Margredel and looking down on me from the height of his grandeur. I felt almost choking, and suddenly running into the kitchen, I exclaimed—

"Why, what were you thinking of, Margredel, to talk that way? This rascally artilleryman will lame your father for life. It's abominable conduct of you. You see plainly enough that your father is the weaker of the two, since the other sent him spinning like a fly, and yet you want them to begin again."

I was almost crying as I said this. She didn't seem the least put about, and went on quietly lifting the lids of her saucepans and tasting her sauces. I saw by the bright colour in her cheeks and the sparkle of her eyes that she was inwardly rejoiced, and this made me more and more indignant.

"Nonsense!" said she at last; "you take a gloomy view of everything, Kasper. Father slipped on a plum-stone; this time it will be a very different matter."

"Slipped on a plum-stone! There was as much a plum-stone there as there is on the palm of my hand. Uncle invented that story to excuse himself in the eyes of the company, and I couldn't contradict him. But if Yeri-Hans comes here he will find plum-stones in plenty in the square, in the streets—everywhere."

Instead of working on Margredel's feelings by these judicious observations, I only made her more obstinate. She began to wipe up her plates and dishes, and replied with an air of indifference—

"We shall see. Whether there are plum-stones or not, I am for my father. Yeri will be thrown, you'll see. I feel certain he will be thrown if he dares to come. But he won't come."

And as just then I heard uncle returning, I was obliged to hold my tongue. I returned to the sitting-room, took my clarionet and my music from the table, and ran upstairs like a madman to my bedroom with-

out knowing what I was doing. There I sat down on my trunk with my face buried in my hands, and with such a longing to pour forth my sorrow in tears and groans that I thought my heart would have burst. I began to see that all our plans for the future were going bodily to destruction, and all that through Uncle Conrad's fault, whom I had always looked on as a reasonable being, but who now appeared to me, with his love of glory, as the most insensate of men.

It was the beginning of the end.

At midday, during dinner, uncle did nothing but tell us of all the clever tricks he had discovered for getting the victory. Margredel approved of everything he said, nodding her head, and seeming in an ecstasy of delight. She kept constantly repeating—

"If he would only come—but he'll be afraid; he won't venture to come, I'm sure."

And uncle replied in a firm tone—

"If he doesn't come, all the country will know that I slipped on a plum-stone."

For my own part I thought—"Good gracious! is it possible for any one to be such a simpleton at the age of fifty-three? If he were fortunate enough to throw Yeri he would fairly die of joy. And that Margredel, now she leads the old man by the nose, by making him believe he is the stronger! That's just the way she would have led me all my life."

Oh, what pain this spirit of trickery and cunning gave me!

In spite of all, I couldn't help thinking Margredel perfectly beautiful. I would have liked to fly from the house in order to hide my despair. I saw by her eyes that she guessed all my thoughts, but that she cun-

ningly pretended to believe that Yeri-Hans would not come, whilst all the while the gipsy woman perhaps had been bringing her messages for the last month. I saw all that. I was almost sure of it, and I felt as if I must stay.

Oh, how delighted I should have been to hear that big Yeri had fallen headforemost from his father's barn, or that he had had five or six ribs broken by some wrestler stronger than himself! Yes, I am ashamed to say how happy that would have made me. But none of these things took place, and I must now tell you of the fête. Since I have begun I must finish.

CHAPTER IX.



HE answer from Kirschberg arrived the same evening, towards eight o'clock. We were at supper, when Nickel entered, with his stick in his hand, and announced to us that Yeri-Hans accepted Mr. Stavolo's invitation to dinner, that he was glad to hear that he had got quite well of his sprain, and that he would consider it a real honour to try a fall with him in the public green of Eekerswir before all comers.

This news filled Margrieta with joy, but she was far too knowing to let it appear.

"I declare, after all," exclaimed she, with an air of astonishment, "Kasper was right! I never could have believed that Yeri-Hans would come—no, I never could have believed it."

Uncle Conrad, in his enthusiasm, wanted to show me

several new tricks which he had invented to overthrow the big artilleryman, but I had had quite enough of them already.

"Thank you, uncle," said I, feeling very sad, "I will take your word for it. Show these tricks to Yeri himself. I know nothing about them. All I wish now is that there may be no plum-stones in the square."

So saying, I left the sitting-room in a state of mind impossible to describe.

"Wait, Kasper, wait a moment, will you?" cried uncle.

But I never even turned my head. I wished everybody at Jericho, Yeri-Hans, uncle, Margredel, and myself too. I had thoughts of flying to America, to Algeria—no matter where.

The following morning the preparations for the fête began. Every one set to work to whitewash the large sals, to scour the tables and benches, to clean the windows and sand the floor. One would have said that Yeri-Hans was some prince or other, so anxious did Uncle Conrad seem to give him a good reception. Margredel sent for Catherina Vogel, cook to old Bockes, the curé, to help her to prepare her küchlen, her kougelhof, her cream tarts, and her cheesecakes. The kitchen was in a blaze from six o'clock in the morning till nine at night.

And just see the cunning of women! The nearer the moment approached the more gracious was Margredel towards me, doubtless for the purpose of keeping me in uncertainty, and preventing me from informing uncle of what was going on.

"Hey! Kasper, why do you look so sad?" she would say to me. "Come, smile at me like a good fellow."

I would give anything to know what can be vexing you."

And she laughed so merrily, showing her little white teeth, that I was forced to appear gay, although the tears were in my eyes. Sometimes, even, I took myself to task for being so suspicious. I said to myself, "Can Margredel be capable of feigning to that extent? Could she look at me so lovingly if at the bottom of her heart she didn't love me a little? It's impossible! It's wrong of you, Kasper, to harbour such thoughts."

And I tried to find all sorts of reasons for believing that I was mistaken, that Margredel loved me, that she was not thinking of Yeri-Hans, that she only did these things to try me, to make me jealous; in short, I invented a thousand explanations of her conduct, to try and deceive myself; but in spite of all I saw clearly how it was, and said to myself, "Poor Kasper! poor Kasper! you had much better go at once; what's the use of trying to blind yourself in this way? It's the other that she loves. It's because the other is coming that she sings, and dances, and laughs, and gets ready all these dainties. Has she ever done the one quarter of it for you?"

Ah! how sad it is to think such things, and not to be sure of anything! "If I was only sure," I said to myself many and many a time, "I would take my knapsack and be off, and by-and-by, after a time, perhaps, I might forget it and be happy again."

What surprised me most was, Margredel's confidence; for after what I had told her on the subject of the plum-stone, she must have known that Yeri-Hans would get the better of her father, and then all these invitations, and compliments, and marks of friendship

of uncle's towards the big artilleryman would change into hatred and maledictions. Those who knew Uncle Conrad's character, his extraordinary love of glory, and his vexation at having been conquered, must have foreseen this, and Margredel, with her cleverness, knew right well that if Yeri-Hans carried off the victory again, he durst never venture to put his foot in the house, and that if he ever came to ask her in marriage, uncle would think nothing of sticking a pitchfork into him. This was quite certain. Well, Margredel never showed the least uneasiness. She seemed in high spirits. I couldn't help fancying that there was some abominable trick or other under all this, I suspected that the gipsy had been there again, I had all sorts of ideas of this kind, and I always ended by saying to myself, "If only uncle is beaten, if Yeri-Hans only succeeds in throwing him, then all will be well. Margredel may mope, and look glum, and cry as much as she pleases, uncle will remain as firm as a rock. The very look of the artilleryman would throw him into a towering rage. It's unfortunate that he should have to be beaten again, but it's the best thing that could happen for everybody."

And thinking in this way, I took heart again. I even laughed a little now and then when she passed her hand over my hair. What can you expect? A falling man will catch at any twig that comes in his way, without stopping to think whether it will bear his weight or not.

Up to the evening before the fête Margredel was most gracious in her manner towards me. I shall never forget that on this evening, about six o'clock, a few minutes before supper, as I was sitting thinking, with

my head against the clock-case and my legs crossed, listening to the tic-tac of the pendulum and the crackling of the kitchen fire, suddenly Margredel came in her short petticoat and bodice, her arms bare, and made a sign to me to follow her, in order not to disturb Uncle Conrad, who was reading the *Limping Messenger*, at the corner of the table, with his spectacles on his nose and his eyes wide open. I followed her, and when she had closed the door, she showed me, in the first place, her tarts and beignets ranged neatly on the shelves of the dresser, and as I was looking at them, she led me opposite a plate of kùchlen powdered with fine sugar, saying—

“Look, Kasper, I made these for you, and yet you don’t look pleased!”

“For me, Margredel?” said I softly.

“Yes, yes, for you,” cried she; “expressly for yourself! You surely don’t doubt what I tell you?”

Then, not knowing what to say in reply, I sat down by the fireside, where Mother Catherina was coming and going, lifting off the lids of the saucepans, and began to eat the beignets, whilst in spite of myself the tears trickled down my cheeks.

I said to myself—“She loves me still!” and I thought the beignets the most delicious I ever ate.

Margredel had gone away to lay the cloth. When she returned I smiled at her, and taking her hand—

“Ah! Margredel,” cried I, “there’s something I have to ask your forgiveness for.”

“What is it?” said she, quite surprised.

“Oh! no, no! I cannot tell you now. Some other time—some other time!”

I was thinking that I had done wrong in suspecting

her of deceiving me, and that is what made me ask her pardon. She looked at me. I didn't know whether at the moment she guessed my thoughts, but she blushed and said—

“Come in, Kasper; supper is on the table. Father is waiting for you.”

“Oh! how good those beignets were!” exclaimed I. “I am not in the least hungry now.”

“Come, come, be off out of this!” said Mother Catharina, laughing; “we don't want any men here.”

And I returned to the *salle* and took my seat at the table with more confidence than I had felt for a long time.

“Waldhorn is in the village,” said Uncle Conrad to me the moment I sat down. “I forgot to tell you that he called here to see you this afternoon whilst you were out taking a walk in the *Reeberg*. He expects you this evening at the *Three Pigeons* with the whole orchestra. To-morrow you will earn two crowns at least, Kasper; the next day as much, and so on till the last day of the *fête*. It's not a bad trade playing the clarionet.”

Then he added, laughing—

“The two arpents are getting on, my boy. Take courage!”

As he said this I felt as if a great weight were lifted off my breast—as if I had awakened out of some frightful dream.

No sooner was supper over than I ran over to the *Three Pigeons*, where Waldhorn was waiting for me. All our comrades were there, their trombones and French horns hanging on the walls. We shook hands, and calling for a *chope* or two of wine we began to talk

of business. It was arranged that we should perform at two of the tables d'hôte the following day, from one till three, and that after vespers we should play for dancing at the Madame Hütte. Waldhorn had already secured the job.

I returned home about ten o'clock. Uncle Conrad had gone to bed, and Margredel and Catherina Vogel were still busy with their preparations. I took a peep at Margredel as I passed, through the kitchen window, then mounted to my bedroom, where, having got into bed, I slept till near eight o'clock the next morning—a thing which hadn't happened to me for six weeks before.

It was the noises of the fair, the squeaking of the wooden trumpets, the cries of the booth-keepers and the proprietors of the different games, that at length awoke me. I leaped out of bed in high spirits, and having slipped on my pantaloons I opened my window. The weather was magnificent, the air was filled with sunshine. The flag was floating over the Madame Hütte, the people were threading their way amongst the stalls, or making the circuit of the crockery and other articles spread out on the green, purchasing, bargaining, and gazing at the goods arranged in tempting array on the shelves. The players were already gathered in groups round the rampô, and all down the street, as far as the eye could reach, nothing was to be seen but rows of country carts, and the great waggons, with ladder-like sides, peculiar to the district, all crowded with three-cornered hats, red waistcoats, embroidered head-gear, little short cherry-coloured petticoats, and rosy laughing faces.

You will readily imagine that on this day, when

Yeri-Hans was expected, I didn't forget to make myself as smart as I could. Eight days before, when returning from Munster, I had bought expressly for the occasion a new shirt, embroidered with red on the collar and front, the very handsomest that could be got for love or money; this I put on. I also put on my gold earrings, a silver brooch in the shape of a heart in the bosom of my shirt, my embroidered shoulder-straps, as broad as my hand, my green coat with bright copper buttons, and my high boots.

I felt happy in taking all this pains with my dress: I was thinking of Margredel. I fancied she would see that I was handsomer than the artilleryman, and this idea brought the tears into my eyes. From time to time I sat down to think and listen to what was going on below. There was a great noise of people coming and going and talking together in the large salle, and every moment Uncle Conrad's loud voice could be heard welcoming his guests.

"Ha! Good day, Mr. Burgomaster. Ha! ha! ha! It's a real pleasure to see you! This is fine weather we have got now. Why, Madame Seypel, positively you are growing younger every day!"

"Oh! Mr. Stavolo, Mr. Stavolo!"

"It's the real truth. Ah! Madame Seypel, you put me in mind of the good old times, some five-and-twenty years ago now, when I used to dance the Lutzelsstein Hopser with you. He! he! he!"

Then they laughed and took their seats, as I could hear from the scraping of chairs on the floor. Meanwhile I listened; I looked at myself in the glass; I brushed my hat with my sleeve. I was always afraid of finding a speck somewhere or other on my dress.

Outside, the hum of the merry-makers in the fair grew louder and louder. I had left my room door open, and the smell of the aniseed tarts, the pies, and the k  chlen came up the stairs. It had just struck eleven, and I felt surprised that Yeri-Hans had not yet made his appearance. I had heard uncle say once or twice to Margredel on the stairs—

“That rascal isn’t here yet! Can he mean to play me a trick? If he isn’t here in a quarter of an hour, we’ll sit down quietly to dinner without troubling our heads about him.”

I could see from the tone of his voice that he was getting angry. Margredel said nothing. I laughed inwardly, and was about to go down, when all at once uncle cried out—

“There he is!”

I had already my foot in the lobby, but at this exclamation of my uncle’s a strange feeling came over me. I went back into my room, and peeping cautiously from the window, I saw in front of the house, just at the foot of the steps, Yeri-Hans mounted on a fine dappled grey horse, with a skin like silk, and a beautiful long tail, which he kept whisking about. He had on his magnificent artillery uniform, and his shako, with two bright copper cannons crossed in front and a red plume above, which gave him a superb appearance. Picture to yourself this martial-looking man, mounted on his grey charger, that pawed the ground and champed the bit with impatience, and all along the railing Uncle General’s guests leaning over the balustrade to welcome him. Margredel, with bare arms, in a little headdress of blue silk, and embroidered chemise, her cheeks as red as cherries, and her eyes sparkling: the fat burgomaster,

raising his hat and puffing out his stomach like a bullfinch; Mrs. Councillor Seypel, smiling with an agreeable air, with her great quilted cap perched on the back of her head, her withered cheeks, sharp nose, and the waist of her gown more than half-way up her back; Mr. Preceptor Reinhart, Father Brêmer and his two tall red-haired daughters Lotchen and Grédelé, old Meriâne, Orchel, and Catherina Vogel—picture to yourself all these people leaning over each other's shoulders, and all round, the goodwives of the neighbourhood collected at the windows, and the crowds of people in the fair turning round to gaze on the sight. This is what I saw, and I could not help thinking that Margredel would certainly be dazzled by this fine uniform, and that my clothes would look nothing beside it, which put me in a sad state of trouble. I was in a sort of way ashamed of myself; I would have liked to hide somewhere, and yet, in spite of myself, my grief and vexation kept me nailed to the spot.

Uncle Stavolo, with his broad-brimmed beaver ornamented with a blue ribbon, his broad shoulders almost bursting through his tight-fitting jacket, and his face beaming with smiles, had just run down the steps into the street, and was standing gazing at the artilleryman from head to heel, with the greatest admiration, shaking him warmly by the hand, and exclaiming—

“You are welcome, Yeri-Hans, you are heartily welcome! There's no enmity between us, I hope?”

“Enmity between us, Mr. Stavolo?” said the other, in a laughing, cheerful way. “Never! Since our encounter at Kirschberg I love and esteem you more than ever.”

"That's right!" said uncle; "I am glad to hear it. The table is laid for dinner. You are just in time."

Then Yeri, looking up, saw Margredel, and exclaimed—

"Your servant, Miss Margredel. Handsomer, fresher, and more graceful than ever, I see! Ah, Mr. Stavolo, you may be a proud man!"

"Oh! Mr. Yeri," replied the innocent Margredel, "I'm quite sure you don't believe a word of what you are saying!"

"I! I believe a thousand times more than I say," cried the artilleryman, his eyes beaming with undisguised admiration.

Then he saluted the other personages of the company by raising his hand to his kepi, and, leaping to the ground, he gave his horse's bridle to Councillor Spitz, who appeared flattered at the honour, and began to laugh like an old magpie, with his mouth grinning from ear to ear. Oh! the baseness of men! To think of a municipal councillor doing such a thing! If Orchel had not come forward to take the bridle and lead the horse off to the stable, I verily believe Mr. Spitz would have held it to all eternity.

As for me, seeing Yeri-Hans coming up the steps, I thought it was time for me to go downstairs, in order to avoid causing any scandal in the house, for if I had not made my appearance at table, Uncle Conrad would have insisted on knowing the reason. I went down, therefore, and Yeri-Hans, meeting me in the kitchen, cried—

"Hallo! Is it you, Kasper? How goes it, Kasper-my boy?"

You may imagine my indignation at being addressed

in this familiar way by a scoundrel like that, but as he held out his hand, I was of course obliged to take it, and to say in reply—

“Why, pretty well, Yeri; I feel quite well, thank you.”

“That’s right, I’m glad to hear it,” said he, laughing, and showing his great white teeth.

We entered the *salle* just as Catherina Vogel made her appearance from the kitchen with an immense smoking soup-tureen. Yeri-Hans twirled up the ends of his moustache, and said, as if speaking to himself—

“I’m as hungry as a hawk.”

And as I passed behind him, I thought, “I wish you had a bellyful of good drubbing!”

“Hey! Yeri, Yeri, this way,” cried uncle, pointing to the end of the table; “sit here beside me. The others can find whatever places they choose.”

Yeri seemed to think it quite natural that he should have the place of honour. He took his seat beside Uncle Conrad, and the other guests seated themselves wherever they fancied. As for me, I got near the window at the back, beside Madame Seypel, who talked very little, and old Omacht, who said scarcely anything. In the state of mind I was in the place exactly suited me. I could scarcely help bursting out crying, and yet I was obliged to put a good face on it and eat something. As for Margreder, she never gave me a look. My handsome embroidered shirt, my green coat, my gold earrings, were all thrown away. Uncle Conrad and his daughter had eyes for no one but Yeri-Hans.

CHAPTER X.



COULD talk to you for hours about this dinner, which lasted till three o'clock. Yes, I could talk to you about it for hours, although it is such a time since it took place.

I can still fancy I see, sitting amongst the row of guests, Mr. Municipal Councillor Spitz, with his long sharp nose, his great round eyes, and his rat-tailed wig, the tie bobbing about on his shoulders as he moved. I can see him munching away, and laughing at every word Uncle Conrad uttered; and, near him, the bald, fat burgomaster, lifting his elbow, and drinking, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling in a sort of rapture; and Miss Sophia Schlick, Margredel's schoolmistress, with a little curl on each temple, and three or four stray hairs stretched over her forehead, like the strings of a piano. I can hear her repeating every minute—"How unfortunate that I breakfasted so late! I haven't a bit of appetite! It's most unfortunate!" All which didn't prevent her from playing havoc with the dishes of sausages, the pâtés, the küchlen, the kougelhof, and everything she could see on the table; and Madame Wagner, the wife of the ex-brigadier of gendarmerie, large, fat, and sallow, a cap, with huge red ribbons, perched on her frizzy head, and the drops of her immense earrings falling down below her great hanging cheeks. I can see her pushing her chair farther back, with a deep sigh at each remove, and at last merely picking in her plate with her arm outstretched at full length; and Mr. Preceptor Reinhart,

who was in the habit of taking pills three days before any wedding dinner or other entertainment that his numerous friends invited him to; and old Meriâne, who clacked his tongue every time he emptied his glass, and murmured in a low voice—"That's Kutterlé of 'thirty-four; that's Rangen of last year; that's Drahenfeltz," and so on, without paying the least attention to what was going on.

And Uncle Conrad, who every now and then raised himself up in his chair, and coughed, as if about to recount his former battles, but did not venture to do so, recollecting his mishap at Kirschberg; and the tall artilleryman, in his handsome uniform, sitting bolt upright, with a haughty martial air, twisting up his moustache, on which the drops of wine were standing, wiping his chin with his napkin, and glancing towards the wide-open door of the kitchen, where the innocent Margredel was coming and going, bringing in the dishes and bottles with a timid air, and smiling to show her little white teeth.

Ah! good gracious, I could talk for ever about that dinner. I know that the same guests partook afterwards of festivities at which I was not present, and that several of them even mocked at what they called my simplicity, as if the faults of others, their bad faith, and their hypocrisy, could be fairly charged against me—as if there was anything shameful in believing the word of those whom we love, and as if honest folks were ridiculous for allowing themselves to be deceived through the goodness of their hearts! I might describe them in my turn, and show up their fearful gormandising, but I would rather be silent, for ill-natured tongues would say that I spoke so from envy and jealousy.

No: I prefer to remain silent, and put up with the injustice which has been done me.

The entertainment seemed to me as if it would never be over. I was wearied to death. I saw that things were going from bad to worse, that bottle after bottle was emptied, and that uncle was on the point of beginning the history of his battles, for ever since the adventure at Kirschberg, in place of keeping modestly silent as he used to do, he never ceased talking of his former victories. He was just beginning, when Orchel touched me on the shoulder, and told me that Waldhorn was outside with the rest of our comrades, and was waiting for me to make our rounds through the village.

I seized this pretext and left the room, to the great satisfaction of Margredel and Yeri-Hans, and to my own too. What was the use of all this hypocrisy? Why not simply say to people—"I don't want to have anything more to say to you?" Why give me the *küchlen* the evening before? Why allow me to hope to the very last? Margredel's conduct filled me with indignation.

Notwithstanding this I left the room with a gay laughing air, not to give the artilleryman the gratification of seeing that he had caused me pain. I shook hands with Waldhorn on the stairs, laughing all the time like a madman at my own stupidity, which surprised him a good deal, as latterly he had seen me look very low-spirited.

"You have been drinking, Kasper?" said he.

"Is it I? Only one glass of wine, I assure you. No: I was laughing at some ideas which were running through my head."

"And your clarionet?"

"I'll go and fetch it."

As I was crossing the *salle* to get to my room, Uncle Conrad called out to me—

"Hi! Kasper!"

"What is it, uncle?"

"Are the musicians outside?"

"Yes."

"Well, why don't they come in?"

"Do you wish for some music?"

"Of course we do, on a day like this!"

"Very good! We will be here directly."

I ran upstairs to get my clarionet; then, going to the window, I called to my comrades to come in. When they had all entered, we began to play, and with such life and spirit, too, especially my clarionet, that I couldn't help being surprised at it myself. Margredel looked at me uneasily, but I only laughed and threw mocking looks at her in return. I was no longer like the same man. I was beside myself.

Uncle Conrad was singing and beating time on the table. Twice he called us back when we were on the steps going away. At last he insisted on singing the old song of "The Three Hussars," setting out for the wars, each verse of which ended with the words, "Adieu! adieu! adieu!" It was their sweethearts, their mothers, their uncles, and their cousins who were thus bidding the hussars farewell.

While my uncle was thundering out the words of the song, with his deep, strong voice, to the accompaniment of the music, all the guests joining in the chorus, Margredel left the *salle*. The tall artilleryman was keeping time with the handle of his knife on the table. I had put my clarionet under my arm, for I was

trembling from head to foot. I had not strength to play another note ; I felt my cheeks, and even the roots of my hair, growing cold, and when, for the last time, the chorus repeated, " Adieu ! adieu ! adieu !" I turned round, and looked towards the kitchen door, where Margredel had hid herself, thinking that she, too, would perhaps address the same words to me. But she said nothing.

Then, every one having stopped singing, I began to laugh. It seemed to me as if something had given way in my breast, like the spring of a clock, which whirls round without you being able to stop it, and which marks all the hours on the dial in a minute.

I saw that the other musicians were going, and I followed them without being perceived. Once outside I grew calmer, and, as the comrades were climbing the grande rue in a body, my old friend Waldhorn held me back a little, and said to me—

"Kasper, one would think, from the way you talk and laugh, that you were in high spirits, but I can see that you are sad."

"It's true," said I ; "I feel as if I would burst out crying every minute."

"And why?"

Then, whilst we were walking along, I told him everything that had happened.

"Bah !" said he, "is that all? Why, so much the better. A musician has no business getting married. And, besides, your Margredel——"

"Well, what?"

"I will tell you about that another time. Here we are at Dreyfon's the deputy's door. Let's go in. All this, Kasper, shouldn't cost a man of sense like you

two minutes' thought. When a woman is going to pounce on you in this way, and another man steps into your place, you ought to thank your stars a hundred times for your escape. It's a proof that a good angel is watching over you."

Talking in this way, Waldhorn drew me into the *salle*, where we made a second halt. In short, up to half-past two we made the rounds of all the rich folks in the village, and at three o'clock we were on our stand in the *Madame Hütte*.

I kept constantly thinking of what Waldhorn had said to me, but it didn't put me in any better spirits, and I thought to myself that what suits one man doesn't always suit another.

There was quite a crowd of people dancing. They had come from *Kirschberg*, *Ribeauville*, *St. Hippolyte*, *Lapourtraye*, *Orbay*—from everywhere, in short. All these beavers and three-cornered hats, with their gay ribbons, and the women's dresses of a thousand different colours, whirling round before my eyes, fairly dazzled and stupified me. The joy, the shouts, the bursts of laughter, sent a pang through my breast. I lost all command of myself; I felt as if I would go mad.

From time to time Waldhorn said to me—

"For Heaven's sake, *Kasper*, don't blow so strong. Nothing can be heard in the orchestra but your instrument!"

But on I went, without a moment's pause, now half a note higher, and at other times half a note lower, than the rest, with my cheeks puffed out to the front of my nose, and scarcely seeing an object before me.

Waldhorn was in despair, and the comrades looked

at me, fairly stupified, for such a thing had never happened with me before.

All at once, towards four o'clock, Uncle Conrad's thundering voice awoke me out of my stupor. I rubbed my eyes and looked round.

All the guests were entering the hall, I leave you to imagine in what a state, uncle leading the way, with his great beaver, ornamented with ribbons, over one ear, and Mother Wagner leaning on his arm; then Yeri-Hans with Margredel; the burgomaster with Madame Seypel; and the others following two and two, as red as boiled lobsters. Uncle, with his arms in the air, was giving hurrah after hurrah until the Madame Hütte fairly shook again. The artilleryman was leaning over, with moistened eyes, towards Margredel, twisting his moustache, and talking to her with a very loving air.

At this sight I began to blow so strong that the false notes came thick and fast, and Waldhorn, who could stand it no longer, cried out—

“Kasper, are you deaf? For the love of Heaven, stop! You will put the whole company to flight.”

But what mattered his expostulations to me? My despair was so great that I paid no heed to anything that was said to me.

In the meantime uncle began to waltz with Mother Wagner, putting his hands on her shoulders, in the old-fashioned style; then all the guests joined in, and I saw no more—everything seemed whirling round me, both the building and the people. I heard the boom of the horn, the shrill blast of the trumpet, the piping of the second clarionet, the scraping of the shoes on the floor; I saw the flutter of the ribbons, the clouds

of dust mounting up to the roof, the hands of the dancers held gracefully in the air, a crowd of smiling and laughing faces spinning round underneath, like the images of Montbéliard, where you see the wedding guests descending to the infernal regions, dancing, singing, and embracing like maniacs.

As I was thinking of these things, in a stupid way, the waltz came to an end, the dancers led their partners to their seats, and I heard Uncle Stavolo cry out—

“Now is the time, Yeri; are you ready?”

“Yes, Mr. Stavolo,” replied the artilleryman.

There was a deep silence.

I understood at once that they were going to wrestle. For a moment I was in hopes that Yeri-Hans would crush two or three of uncle’s ribs in, and that then they would be enemies for life. I pictured to myself Margredel coming back to me, and my saying—

“Oh, ho! You want to come back, do you? but I know you now. I don’t want to have anything more to say to you!”

This idea came across me like a flash, but the next moment I became attentive to what was going on, and I saw Uncle Conrad and Yeri-Hans leaving the Hütte. The crowd followed them in a body. In passing, Margredel and Yeri-Hans gave each other a look. Margredel was deadly pale. She remained behind in the Madame Hütte, near the door, not wishing to be present at the struggle. Yeri smiled, and I saw him bend his head. I asked myself—

“What can he mean by that sign?”

But almost immediately afterwards I heard some one cry outside—

“Make room! make room!”

It was Uncle Conrad's voice.

Waldhorn and two or three of our comrades, not being able to leave the stand, had pulled off a plank from the building in order to see into the square. I approached the opening, and saw that the crowd below had already formed a circle—men, women, and even several children mounted on their fathers' shoulders. In the centre of the circle were Uncle Stavolo and Yeri-Hans. They had both taken their coats off and handed their hats to some of the bystanders to hold, and were standing watching with grave and observant looks.

"Yeri, let us take each other round the body this time," said uncle.

"As you please, Mr. Stavolo ; I await your pleasure," replied the artilleryman.

"Well, come on—in all honour and friendship!" cried uncle in a voice of thunder.

"In all honour and friendship!" replied Yeri-Hans.

They took hold of each other with terrific force, their legs crossed, their arms pressed into each other's sides like tightened ropes, each seeking to shake the other from his position, and every now and then drawing long breaths, while the foam gathered about their lips.

I saw at once that Uncle Conrad wanted to try his famous trick on Yeri-Hans ; but the latter apparently knew it : he smiled, and drew back his arm. Then uncle endeavoured to square his leg so as to throw the other over it ; but Yeri-Hans did the same on the other side, so that it remained to be seen which of them was strong enough to bend his adversary, a thing which seemed as difficult for the one as the other.

Uncle was quite pale, as on the former occasion ;

Yeri as red as fire. The crowd around were looking on in silence, when a child, who was perched on his father's back, cried out—

“The artilleryman is the strongest!”

Then uncle, turning his head, gave the child a furious look, and almost at the same moment Margredel, who had remained in the background, squeezed her way through the crowd, and I saw her looking fixedly at Yeri-Hans, as if to remind him of something. The tall artilleryman's eyes were as red as blood, his moustache was bristling with rage; he held Uncle Stavolo in the air, whilst the latter, with his legs wide apart, was twisting himself furiously, trying to get his feet to the ground again, but without being able to succeed. He was just on the point of being thrown; but no sooner had Margredel made her appearance in the way I have described, than the expression of Yeri's eyes softened, and with a deep sigh he let Father Stavolo drop to the ground again. Then, in about a minute, appearing to lose breath, he allowed himself to be lifted in his turn and hurled to the earth amidst a universal cry of astonishment. In trying to rise he turned over on his back, and both his shoulders touched the ground, so that Uncle Conrad was declared the conqueror.

Uncle then ran up, fairly stupified at his victory, for he had given himself up for lost; uncle ran up, caught the tall artilleryman's hands, and asked—

“Yeri, are you hurt?”

“No, Mr. Stavolo, no, thank God,” replied Yeri-Hans, looking at Margredel with sparkling eyes; “I never felt better. But I yield you the palm, Mr. Stavolo; you have conquered me!”

All this time he was brushing the dust off his trousers with his pocket-handkerchief.

Uncle, fairly out of his wits with delight, exclaimed—

“Yeri, you are the strongest man at the collar I know of; I am the strongest round the body, it’s true, but you bear me no grudge for that, I trust. Give me your hand upon it!”

“With all my heart,” said the artilleryman, still gazing at Margredel.

They embraced; and Margredel, looking at them from a distance, put her hand on her heart. Then I saw it all. This tall rascal of an artilleryman had allowed himself to be conquered out of love to Margredel; knowing that if he threw uncle in the public square he could never see her again, or ask her in marriage. By this trick he expected to ingratiate himself with my uncle—a man full of pride and vanity, and all the more blind to the plot against him, inasmuch as he was really afraid of Yeri-Hans, and couldn’t understand himself how he had got the better of him. His only dread now was that he would have to give the tall artilleryman his revenge. So he embraced him on both cheeks, repeating—

“Yes, Yeri-Hans, at the collar I don’t know the man who can equal you.”

Then turning to the crowd—

“You all understand, this is the strongest man at the collar! It is I, Stavolo, who say it, and if any one ventures to assert the contrary, he shall answer for it to me. Ah, Yeri! you gave me trouble enough, I can tell you, but at present we have only to enjoy ourselves. Take Margredel, Yeri, take Margredel; dance and enjoy yourselves, my children! You will stay with us

during the whole fête, remember, Yeri! We'll have a merry time, you'll see. We'll be as gay as larks! Yes, yes, you must stay with us."

"With all my heart, Mr. Stavolo; it will be a great honour for me."

"An honour! nonsense, man, the honour is all on my side. Well, what are you all standing gaping at there? Be off with you," continued uncle, addressing the crowd, who were staring in puzzled surprise, for he still dreaded that the presence of the spectators would suggest to Yeri the unlucky idea of beginning again.

He buttoned up his coat, assisted the tall artilleryman to pass his arms through the sleeves of his laced jacket, then, taking him by the arm—"Ha, comrade!" exclaimed he, "I would like to see any five, ten, ay, or twenty men who would challenge us two! If the whole fair together were to attack us, they wouldn't frighten us much, eh?"

Thus spoke the old fool, like a child of six years old.

The artilleryman laughed, without making any reply. The sight of Margredel seemed to act like witchcraft on him. He buttoned his coat, and at last said—

"Miss Margredel, now that I am conquered by your father, I hope you won't be ashamed to dance with me?"

"Ashamed!" exclaimed uncle; "I would like to see her ashamed of you. Aren't you the strongest at the collar? Ashamed! Listen to me, Margredel: the greatest pleasure you can give me is to dance with Yeri-Ians. As for me, I'm going to have a glass or two at the Three Pigeons. Take care of my daughter, Yeri; I'll be back by-and-by."

This man, once so prudent and sensible, would now have given wife, child, house, everything he possessed,

to be considered the best wrestler in the country. It makes my flesh creep to think of it even at this distance of time. Just see to what the love of glory leads!

Yeri-Hans thereupon returned with Margredel to the Madame Hütte, but to tell you how they danced, the looks they gave each other, the way Margredel leaned her forehead on the breast of that artilleryman in the waltz; how they rushed about—in short, the way in which they went on—is out of my power. But, to give you an idea of the thing in one word, Margredel by her conduct so totally disgusted me, that my mind was made up at once how to act.

“Even,” said I to myself, “if Yeri-Hans were to go back to Africa to-morrow, I could never marry Margredel. It’s all over—I’ll have nothing more to say to her!”

But for all that, the sight of her cut me to the heart; and during the three days that the fête lasted, having lost all hope, I may as well confess that I longed to die.

The most melancholy part of the affair was Uncle Stavolo’s blindness. Yeri-Hans had become his idol, and his whole delight seemed to be to pamper him up, and strut about arm-in-arm with him through the village. The tall artilleryman had the best room in the house. Every morning Uncle Conrad went up to waken him, about seven o’clock, carrying a bottle of Kutterlé and two glasses, which he placed on the small table, and then you could have heard them all over the house, laughing and talking of their former battles. Margredel could scarcely contain herself with impatience until Yeri came downstairs; then she smiled so sweetly at him, she poured out his coffee so gracefully, she gave such pretty tosses of her head, she tripped about on

the point of her toes—in short, she didn't know what to do to fascinate and subdue the strong, handsome, brave, and terrible Yeri-Hans. As for me, I was like a complete stranger in the house !

At last, on the fourth day, utterly sick and tired of all this, I got up very early, folded up my linen and clothes neatly, packed my knapsack, took my clarionet, and, towards seven o'clock, just as my uncle was going upstairs with his bottle and his two glasses, he met me in the lobby with my stick in my hand.

"Why, is this you, Kasper? where the deuce are you going so early this morning?"

"I am on my way to meet Waldhorn and the other comrades," said I. "The fairs are coming on, and we must take advantage of them. I may very probably be a month away."

"Ah! very good," said he. "Don't forget the two arpents of vines!"

"Don't be uneasy about that, uncle. I shan't forget them."

And having shaken hands with him, I went downstairs. In the hall below, Margredel, who seemed impatient for Yeri's appearance, was passing with the coffee-pot in her hand. My knees bent under me, and in a trembling voice—

"Good-bye, Margredel," said I.

"Oh! is it you, Kasper?"

"Yes, it is I. Good-bye, Margredel."

"Why? are you going away?"

"Yes; I am going away—for some time."

And I looked her steadily in the face. I could see by her agitation that she understood I was going away for good and all. As for me, I felt as if my heart

would burst. I could not utter a word more. At last, endeavouring to steady my voice, I said—

“God bless you—may you be happy when I am far away!”

She gave a slight gasp.

“Kasper!” said she.

But she didn’t say a word more. And, as I waited, she added in a very low voice—

“I shall always love you like a brother, Kasper!”

Then, no longer able to contain myself, I caught her head between my two hands, and kissed her on the forehead.

“Yes—yes—I know that!” said I, lowering my voice. “That is why I am going—I must go—away. Ah! Margredel, my heart is breaking!”

And saying this I ran out on the steps. I fancied I heard a voice calling behind me, “Kasper! Kasper!”

But I can’t be sure. Perhaps it may have been my own sobs that I heard.

There was no one in the street, and I reached the Three Pigeons without any one having been a witness of my tears.

The same day I set out with Waldhorn and the comrades for Saint Hippolyte, and my story is at an end! But stay! about six weeks after, at the beginning of winter, being at Wasselone, I received a letter from Uncle Conrad. Here it is; I have kept it carefully:—

“MY DEAR NEPHEW KASPER,—You must know in the first place that the vintage is over, and that we have one hundred and twenty-three pipes of wine in the cellar. We had a pretty hard job of it; but now, thank goodness, all is settled nicely. Of the hundred

and twenty-three pipes, nineteen are for you; I have put them apart in the little cellar, under the presser. It's a very fair wine, with a good body, and will keep well. Meriâne came one day to offer me thirty francs the pipe for it, before it was ever in the vat; but I refused. If it is worth thirty francs the pipe to Meriâne, it is worth the same to us. I'm not at all anxious to sell. In three or four years that wine will have improved greatly, and we shall see then.

"But that's not what I wanted to say to you. You must know, Kasper, that since you left us a great many things have come to pass. Father Yeri has been here to ask me for Margredel in marriage for his son, and Margredel has consented. There's the whole affair in two words. As for me, I said I had given my word to you, and I would keep it no matter what happened. I don't want to conceal from you that Yeri-Hans is a fine honest-hearted young fellow; so, if you don't want to place me in a very awkward position, you will come back as soon as possible. At all events let me have your answer one way or the other.

"With best love, I am,

"Your uncle, CONRAD STAVOLO."

To this I replied that I loved Margredel too well to make her unhappy, and that Yeri-Hans might marry her since he had her love. What it cost me to write this letter and send it off, I cannot think of even now without trembling.

That winter was a very sad one to me. But the spring time comes round, nevertheless, every year with the song of the lark and the early flowers. And when I looked up at the lovely blue sky, when I felt the

gentle warmth steal, as it were, into my heart, when I watched the last patches of snow melting behind the hedges, then I felt that, after all, life was a blessing, and I lifted up my voice in praise to God for all His mercies.

One day in the early part of spring, Waldhorn, with his cornet slung about his shoulders, and I, with my clarionet under my arm, were following the little by-road, bordered with elders, leading from Saint Hippolyte to Saint-Marie-aux-Mines. I was thinking of Margredel, of Uncle Conrad, of home, of the whole village. I would have liked to return, if it were only for one day, just to get a distant peep of the country, the mountains, the hills.

"What are they all doing now, I wonder?" I kept saying to myself. "What is Margredel thinking of at this moment?—and Uncle Stavolo, and—the other?"

I was walking on, with my head drooping on my breast, when all at once Waldhorn said—

"Kasper, you may remember, towards the end of last autumn, at Eckerswir, my speaking to you about Margredel Stavolo. Well, you must know that she and Yeri had been attached to each other for a long time before."

And as I listened without making any reply, he went on—

"You knew Waldine? She is one of us—a gipsy. Well, she told me that from the time of that fête at Kirschberg she used constantly to carry messages between Margredel and Yeri-Hans. When there was no one in the house, Margredel would put a pot of reseda in the window opposite the steps, and Waldine would come in. That was the plan they had agreed upon."

"Why did you not tell me that at the time?" said I to Waldhorn.

"Bah!" said he. "What is to happen will happen. If Margredel liked the artilleryman better than you, it was quite natural that she should marry him. It's much better for every one. She would only have made you unhappy; and then, if you had got married, Kasper, I could never have got another clarionet anything like as good as you. So you see everything has happened for the best; as it is, we'll play together and tramp the roads side by side to the end of our days."





THE HOSTELRY OF THE
MAYENCE HAM.





THE HOSTELRY OF THE MAYENCE HAM.

CHAPTER I.

FROM nine in the morning until six in the evening did Frantz Sebald Dick, landlord of the tavern called the Mayence Ham, at Bergzabern, owner of a mill at Fromulde, meadows at Eichmatt, vineyards at Rôth-alps, Frankenthal, Gleiszeller, and other famous spots, entertain his friends and acquaintances to do honour to his new purchase of the Kilian vineyard.

The tavern of the Mayence Ham is situated at the bottom of the ancient court of the Trabans, which is entered by a gate opposite Saint Sylvester's Fountain. Its large straight roof reaches to within fifteen or twenty feet of the ground; a row of lofty and narrow windows with small round panes of glass give light to the interior, and open on the large court. From these windows, on the right, you can see the bowling alley

which runs along the crazy walls of the old synagogue; on the left, above the stables, occupied by a crowd of timmen, cobblers, basket-makers, and other people of the same sort, you discover the numberless gables of the town, with their Gothic carvings, their waterspouts, grotesque weathercocks, and storks' nests; the red granite spire of the ancient cathedral, which seems to pierce the clouds, and in the distance the brow of the Frankenthal covered with vines, rising by degrees to the very top of the mountain. Up there it is all light, and when from the gloomy court below one looks up at the vinedressers with their hoes on their shoulders, climbing up the steep dry paths between the vines, or the girls in their short petticoats, with naked feet, dragging their asses loaded with manure from terrace to terrace, so high up, one's eyes become quite dazzled.

From the top of the mountain the distant courtyard, surrounded by the old buildings, looks like a well; for all that, the sun throws its golden rays on it as well, and the autumnal breeze drives the red leaves there, to be collected by poor old women to serve as litter for their goats.

It was, then, in the depth of this court that Master Sebald gave his entertainment, and it was something uncommon, something truly grand. I shall never be able to describe those long tables, covered with their white cloths, under the shade of the synagogue's walls, the vast round-bellied soup-tureens of painted china, the enormous dishes of beef, veal, sausages, and cabbage; pasties with gilded ornaments, boars' heads dressed in white wine, roast venison, oatmeal porridge and brown sugar, capons, crisp roasted sucking-pigs, chickens in jelly, pastry from Hunchourg, Ourmatt,

Emmenthal, and Hirschland cheeses, all of which were consumed on that memorable occasion.

Waiters in their shirt-sleeves, with leather aprons, hurried round the tables with their jugs, filling the glasses with Deidesheimer, Gleiszeller, Musteiner, or Bodenheimer, according to the taste of the guests; glasses rang, cans tinkled, bottles clinked, joy and contentment were depicted on every face. The band from the Sour Herring, as well as those from the Three Puddings and the Fat Ox, played together on lofty stages which reached the roof; the sun warmed the air, it was pleasant to refresh oneself, and each man with red cheeks, grey eyes, and moist lips ate and drank, talked and laughed, and called out—

“Long live Master Sebald! All honour to Master Sebald!”

The whole town of Bergzabern was present at this feast; all the roofs overlooking the court were crowded with heads looking on at the proceedings and snuffing up the smell of the smoking dishes, and expressing their surprise that Master Sebald had invited so many low people when respectable burghers would willingly have honoured him with their presence.

They were indignant at seeing Toubac, the copper-smith; Hans Aden, the dealer in tinder; Karl Beutz, the basket-maker; the veterinary surgeon, Nickel Finck; Bevel Heuné, the wool-comber; Trievel Rasimus, the darning of stockings; the cobbler, Ildes Jacob; Paul Borbès, the knife-grinder; and a hundred other ragamuffins, with their caps on one ear, broken hats, coats out at elbows, torn shirts, shoes down at heel, petticoats in rags—to see them, I say, swallowing roast larks, wings of capons, and bumpers of Deidesheimer, as if

they had done nothing else all their lives, and then unbuttoning their waistbands to be able to stuff themselves more at their ease with creams, "kougelhof," cakes, preserves, and all sorts of delicacies.

"Look at the beggars," said they, "how they are eating! Look! isn't it abominable? They have had fifty dishes one after the other, while respectable people would have been satisfied with a dish of sour-kraut, and an omelette on Sundays. They deserve hanging, and all the time the music is playing to amuse them."

But these remarks offered no hindrance to the course of the banquet, neither did they prevent the guests from emptying more bottles, laughing more heartily than ever, or the orchestra from playing its gayest and loudest. The musicians on their benches had three waiters to attend to them who were continually going up and down the benches with jugs in their hands. After blowing through their trombones, their horns, and their clarionets till their throats were dry, they had a bumper of wine poured out fresh to keep them in breath—they, the Volfort of Rastadt, the Lutzelschneider, the sledge-driver, the three Hopser of Pirmasens, and the Lendlers of Creutznach. The orchestra was led by old Rosselkasten; he looked like the devil in propria persona when he lifted his bow in the air, thrust one leg forward, and gesticulated right and left.

About three there was nothing to be distinguished but a confused noise of laughing, snatches of music, stamping on the floor, hoarse cries, and expressions of satisfaction. Toubac amused himself by pinching old Rasimus, Hans Aden bawled out the pilgrim's song. At the end of the long middle table sat Christian the painter, with his black velvet cap over his ear, his large

blue eyes full of tears, ogling little Fridoline Dick, as fresh as a wild rose, who blushed and looked modestly down. Master Sebald, sitting opposite the capuchin Johannes at the other end of the table, his cheeks crimson, his triple chin swelled up like a cock turkey's, his arms bared to the elbows, his vast stomach resting on his knees, his round projecting eyes and his large nose of the finest vermilion possible to see, laughed loudly enough to make the windows near him shake, and called out as he held out his glass to the waiter—

“Go on, Kasper, go on, up to the brim. Ha! ha! drink! drink!”

And all the others repeated in chorus—

“Yes, yes! let us drink—we must drink!”

The worthy master of the tavern had an especial inclination for the red wine of the Rhinegau; he preferred it to any other: it went to his heart. His friend Johannes, on the contrary, liked the white Bodenheimer wine best, and, strange to tell, the more he drank the more gloomy he became; his temples were ploughed up with wrinkles, he laughed as he talked through his nose, and stammered out—

“That's right; now let loose Beelzebub's thirty-five thousand legions! may the race of Abimelech be confounded! may the angel of the Lord exterminate the firstborn of Egypt—ha! ha! ha!”

Then he made three or four grimaces, and rested his long under-jaw on his hairy fists.

The day was closing, but the slanting rays of the sun were not less hot. Most of the lookers-on had left the roofs, but some obstinately remained basking on the tiles. A few children had crept up to the tables, and some of

the guests gave them a drink from their glasses, or thrust cakes into their pockets. But Mother Rasimus quavered out—

“Ah, now, now I have really done. Toubac, I always loved you.”

“And so did I you, Trievel,” replied the brazier.

And then they leered at each other, while every one laughed at them.

So it was at all the tables, till at last the musicians lost their wind entirely, and even Rosselkasten’s vigour forsook him.

Now, when they thought the feast was at an end, several began to call out—

“Let us go and refresh ourselves with a glass of beer.”

When an enormous pasty made its appearance from the tavern, representing the castle of Rôthalps.

Four waiters bore it from the kitchen on a wide board, and Grédel Dick, who had put on her cap with pink ribbons in its honour, walked by its side in triumph; and while all the guests sighed as they looked at this fine pasty, Grédel’s chef-d’œuvre, as they reflected they never would be able to consume it, it was placed on the centre table, followed by two stuffed peacocks with their tails expanded, which formed a magnificent spectacle. The orchestra was mute, while Master Sebald, making his wife take her seat by his side, rose to speak.

The capuchin Johannes, his eyebrows meeting in a bush over his nose, his red beard, the hood of coarse cloth thrown back on his wide shoulders, looked at it with a dreamy squint, like a he-goat looking at the sun. All the rest of the guests, with their noses in the

air, were most attentive. Master Sebald coughed thrice, and then said in a deep resonant tone of voice—

“My dear companions, it is nearly twenty years we have led a jolly life together; we can boast of having drunk many a quart and many a pint together, thank God for it.

“I have always done my best to please everybody, to have the best wine, the best beer, the best black-puddings, sausages, hams, chitterlings, and, generally speaking, whatever could please people with a good conscience and in good health. By these means the tavern of the Mayence Ham is become famous on both sides of the Rhine from Strasbourg to Cologne. This, in the first place, is owing to me, Frantz Christian Sebald Dick, and next to you, my dear friends.

“Yes, for you have made the reputation of my tavern, and it shall go on increasing for ever—at least I hope so; for after me others of my family will succeed me who will never let it decay. I am, as it were, your field-marshal, my dear friends and companions; we have won many a battle together; I have carried off much booty from the battles we have fought—mills, meadows, vineyards, and you—you——”

Master Sebald, not knowing what to say the others had carried off, took his tankard in both his hands and drank a while to recover his ideas. After which, putting his cup on the table, he added, shouting with laughter—

“And you—you have covered yourselves with glory—ha! ha! ha!”

This did not please everybody, and several thought he intended a joke at their expense. However, no one

opened his mouth, and the tavern-keeper, enchanted at his own eloquence, continued his address:—

“Look there, my dear comrades, look there. You can see the Frankenthal vines, and those of Lupersbach and Rôthalps; farther on those of Lauterbach and many others which you cannot see from here. Well, you have earned all that for Frantz Christian Sebaldus Dick. Is there in all Bergzabern a single burgher who can make the same boast? Not even the burgomaster Omacht; I tell you he has not half nor a quarter as much.

“And this tavern, the largest, and with the best cellar of wine in the place, whose is it? And my wife, Grédel Dick, the best cook in the Rheingau, and my daughter Fridoline, and my own good constitution? As for friends, I do not mention them. Thank God, friends are not wanting when I give a feast; when I treat them to cock-fights, and dinners, and galas, I see them coming by dozens—ha! ha! like sparrows in the corn, like chaffinches in flax; they have always two-and-thirty teeth and an empty bag at your service.

“Therefore I may justly say I am beloved of the Lord, for——”

At that moment the capuchin Johannes, whose cheeks, nose, and even his ears had been quivering ever since the beginning of this fine speech, called out—

“Master Sebald, you are to blame in letting your vanity display itself as you are now doing—it is not Christian-like.”

“Christian!” said the tavern-keeper, in a rage at being interrupted; “much do I care about being a Christian. Such as you see me now, I never respected anything but the sun.”

"The sun?" said Johannes, shrugging his shoulders; "why, you are a pagan; you believe neither in our holy religion nor in the prophets nor the apostles, nor in the coming of our Lord! You have neither law nor Gospel; you worship the onions, turnips, cabbages, and cows of Egypt; you are an Amalekite, a Moabite, a Midianite, a Philistine!"

Every one pricked up his ears at this.

"No," replied Master Sebald, "I worship neither onions, nor turnips, nor cabbages; I prefer black-puddings and chitterlings; but that does not prevent my respecting my god the sun. At all events we can see him—we know what he does for us. In winter, while he is absent, we are all shivering; in springtime, when he returns, we dance, and laugh, and sing; birds, fishes, four-footed animals, and men themselves, even the cockchafers—yes, the cockchafers rejoice to see him again. He gives us rain and sunshine; without him my fields and my vines would not bring me in a farthing; I hold by my god the sun!"

"Why do you go to church on Sundays?" replied Johannes in disgust.

"On account of my daughter Fridoline, to give her a good example. But as for me, I say one must be blind or wrong in the head to believe in aught else but the sun."

"And what are we, then?" yelled the capuchin. "Are we nothing but liars and hypocrites?"

"No, you are gormandisers," replied the fat tavern-keeper in a bantering tone.

Then the whole court burst into shouts of laughter; they held their sides as they sat at table, they rolled in their seats, some laughed till the tears ran down their

cheeks, and Sebald, patting his enormous paunch with both hands, cried—

“Ha! ha! If ever I spoke the truth I did so just now.”

But Father Johannes, he did not laugh; he was quarrelsome in his cups, especially after drinking white wine. After looking at the crowd laughing at his expense for some minutes, his grey eyes nearly closed, then he rose, while his lips trembled. They thought he was going to leave the place, and several were chuckling over his discomfiture; but he, stepping behind Sebald’s chair, grasped his long blackthorn cudgel in both hands, and discharged such a blow across the fleshy loins of the latter, that all present were frightened. Not content with that, he continued to belabour him until Master Sebald, who had been giving himself airs, began to cry out in most lamentable tones—

“Help! he is killing me! Help me, help me!”

Then they all called out—

“Knock the capuchin down! Down with the priests!”

But Johannes, as he backed towards the Trabans Gate, did not seem at all frightened at these cries.

He seemed inspired with a holy rage, and brandished his great cudgel as if it was a walking-cane. Dishes, plates, and jugs were hurled at him by dozens. Some, indignant at the pride of their host, took the terrible monk’s side, others ran away, the women screamed. Fridoline sobbed in Christian’s arms, Grédel untied her husband’s cravat, and, seeing his back covered with bruises, lifted her hands to heaven as if to implore Divine vengeance on the head of Johannes. Sebald himself said not a word, quite astounded; wine was running

down his legs, into his sleeves, and even into his pockets ; he tried to murmur something which was unintelligible. The threefold layers of fat on his ribs alone saved them from being broken.

Toubac, Hans Aden, old Mother Rasimus, all the cobblers, basket-makers, braziers, and knife-grinders, set off in pursuit of Johannes. Under the arch of the Trabans' gateway there was a terrible fight. Toubac having got too near the priest's tremendous cudgel, received a blow on the ear which sent him on his back in one corner, Paul Borbès was in a similar state, and old Rasimus, with nearly all her grey hairs torn from her head, retired slowly from the fray, dragging her rags after her. When Sebald came to himself again, he saw Father Johannes at a distance fighting as he retreated, knocking people down with his club like the exterminating angel.

"Ah! dog of a capuchin!" cried he, "the next time you come asking me to fill your donkey's panniers with eggs, butter, cheese, and black puddings, you shall have them—yes, you shall have them!"

In about a quarter of an hour the defenders of the sun remained masters of the field of battle. But what a sight, what a scene of havoc—windows smashed, tables upset, men hobbling about, the great pasty and the peacocks on the ground, and jugs, plates, and dishes in a thousand pieces! Go and give dinners like Balthazar's feast to cobblers, tinmen, and capuchins—treat them to Forstheimer, Pleiszeller, and Umsteiner—Heaven keep us from such friends as these!

But the worst was to come. All Bergzabern laughed at the general break up, and said respectable people could only be glad when scamps and ragamuffins exterminated one another,

CHAPTER II.



ND this how two old comrades like Father Johannes and Master Sebald suddenly fell out about the sun's divinity, who took no heed whatever of either, but fulfilled his daily task without attending to them. Which proves ideas divide mankind much more than facts; for facts we see, we hear, and we touch, sometimes we enjoy them, while as for ideas every one forms his own according to his own temperament, or maybe even from the colour of the wine he has been drinking. Which farther proves that one ought always to drink the same wine as one's friends if one wishes to keep always on good terms with them.

For twenty years Father Johannes used every morning to go up the street of the Trabans (or halberdiers), and a gleam of satisfaction would light up his goat's visage at the sight of the gateway; for there stood Master Sebald on the threshold of the smoky old tavern, waiting for him in his shirt-sleeves, and holding out his hand to him. He would call out, "Good morning, Father Johannes," when he saw him a good way off, "how are you this morning? How are you after the chitterlings you had for supper last night?" "Well, very well indeed, Master Sebaldus," the capuchin would gaily answer, "Mistress Grédel is without a rival for dressing chitterlings. All night I have been licking my moustaches, and your Umsteiner makes a famous sauce for them, ha! ha! ha!"

Then they both used to shake hands. They entered the tavern; Father Johannes set his stick behind the

door, and Master Sebald would shout out—"Grédel! Grédel! Father Johannes is come—you can bring the fry in. Come, Father Johannes, sit down, and I will go and draw a pint of wine. It is very hot this morning—we must provide against it beforehand."

And then the fat old fellow, caressing his stomach with both hands, would turn to the right to the cellar stairs, under the wormeaten gallery, while Mistress Grédel opened the kitchen door, crying out, "Welcome, welcome," to Father Johannes—one could hear the butter in the frying-pan, and see the flames on the hearth.

Father Johannes would take a seat all smiles and good-humour, and Mistress Grédel would hurry in with a large dish of professor's wurst, violet-coloured, and covered with small specks of white from the boiling grease in which they had been cooked. Master Sebald would come up from the gloom of his cellar with a jug in his fist and set it before his old crony, and say, as he drew a long breath after climbing up the cellar stairs—

"Now then to breakfast, Father Johannes. Grédel, fetch us some mugs. You must just give me your opinion of that wine; it is that light-coloured wine we made six years ago; it improves every day. When I went to my cellar under the Schlossgarten the day before yesterday, I saw it and knew it again; it is something delicious!" and he would kiss the tips of his fingers with a beatified air.

"We shall soon see," the capuchin would say, as he turned up his great moustaches.

Then Master Sebald would slacken his waistband and seize on a fork. Soon after Fridoline would make

her appearance from the old gallery where she had an apartment to herself; she used to lean over the banisters, her eyes half open, a little white cap tied under her rosy chin, and a handkerchief crossed over her bosom—

“Good morning, Father Johannes; I wish you a good appetite, Papa Sebald.”

Then both would look up, the long beard of the one and the fat cheeks of the other shining with grease, and reply together—

“Good morning, my child—good morning! Take a drop of wine; these professor’s sausages are delicious!”

She came down and embraced them both.

How fond they were of that child! How many times had Father Johannes taken her with him on his donkey Polak when he went his rounds! how often had he nursed her with his great hairy hands! When she was quite little he carried her about with him for hours on the wide sleeves of his coarse brown gown, she resting her little rosy cheek against his tanned face, and her delicate little hands buried in his tawny beard, he as happy as possible, and his face glowing with internal satisfaction. In this way he used to take her about Bergzabern with him, and about the country, pointing out to her the distant blue line of the Rhine as it disappeared in the verdant plains, and from the heights of the Bocksberg innumerable villages, the old town with its square cross, the small yards, the stalls and hovels; then when they came back he showed her old Mother Rasimus feeding her rabbits, Toubac mending pots and kettles, and old Bével wool-spinning. He stopped at the windows as they went along to please her and give her an idea of what she saw. How

he loved that child, the tavern, and Sebald himself, and how they loved him! All Fridoline's recollections were mixed up with the kindly explanations of the old capuchin; she saw and thought of him always, and believed he was a part of the family.

After breakfast, about seven in summer and eight in the winter, other acquaintances of the Mayence Ham generally made their appearance: Hans Aden, Toubac, Borbès, and old Rasimus—sometimes on fête days all together, but usually one after the other as they finished their work. They had a drop at the counter, and a plate of saurkraut; customers came and went out—those who had nothing to do played at rams or youker, or else at ninepins in the yard; then they went to dinner.

Christian, the painter, the best-favoured lad in Bergzabern, with his little cap and his Polish pelisse, fitting tight to his waist, quick eye, white teeth, and small light moustache curled upwards, came there habitually about five in the evening, making the heels of his boots sound on the flagstones of the court, and whistling gently—"I love you, I love you, my pretty white dove." Fridoline, in her own little room under the roof, saw him coming from behind her flowerpots, so laying her work down she hurried down into the tavern, and there she was behind the counter as he came in.

"Ha!" cried the young fellow, "good evening, Father Johannes, Master Sebald, and all friends! Just one glass, Mamma Grédel, if you please!"

"Ah! there's the boy at last," said Johannes; "so much the better; I began to think he was not coming this evening, and that disappointed me."

He had just one look at Fridoline, who blushed up to her ears. Christian shook hands with every one, then leaning over the shoulders of the old capuchin he appeared to be looking at Toubac's cards, or Hans Aden's, or anything else, while in reality he never took his eyes off dear Fridoline, who dropped her long eyelashes on her cheeks very demurely. They seldom parted before midnight, and Father Johannes was always the last to set off with his great tin lantern for his hermitage at Luppertsberg,

I do not mention either the cock-fights or the bear-baitings, or the flights of larks in the autumn, sack races, asparagus feasts, or the vintages; of course in those days it was something more than common, and old Rasimus distinguished herself on such occasions by dancing the "Hopser" of Lutzelsstein with Toubac.

Such was their everyday life—easy, plentiful, a really prosperous existence, and which promised to be lasting also, to the satisfaction of every one.

But to return to the great battle. That night Master Sebald, in his indignation, called Father Johannes an ill-conditioned varlet, a blackguard, a gallows-bird, a pauper, and a gormandising glutton; he never could abuse him enough, and returned to the charge continually. Toubac, Rasimus, and the rest of them, as they sat at the table in the tavern, never left off bragging about their victory, and swallowed their beer with enthusiasm.

However, about four in the morning some of them were taken unwell in consequence, and went to sleep with their noses in their mug; others were just able to stagger home. They could be heard a long way off knocking at their doors, and their neighbours open

their windows and swear at them, while barking dogs and crowing cocks heralded the approach of day.

Sebald, seated behind the counter with staring eyes and flaccid cheeks, took it into his head he felt the cold air too much, for the windows had remained open, and the fog of the morning came into the room; so he thought he would go to bed, but judge his consternation when he found himself as stiff as a log of firewood; most dreadful pains went along his back from the nape of his neck downwards.

"Good Lord!" cried he, "what can be the matter with me?"

He made a second attempt to rise, but the pain was so great that he began to cry—

"Grédel! O Lord, what pain I am in! That beggarly capuchin has broken my back. Oh, I shall die!"

His cheeks became purple; he panted, shut his eyes, and called out—

"O Lord! have pity on me!"

The remaining guests woke up and looked as stupid and astonished as those at Belshazzar's feast.

Grédel ran in crying—

"Sebald! Sebald! what's the matter?"

"Don't touch me, don't touch me," groaned poor Sebald; "when I am touched I feel as if I was being beaten over again. God of Heaven! to think I can move neither hand nor foot; some one must help me now even when I want to drink. Ah, good Lord! if I was only sure I should ever get better! Grédel, Grédel, go and fetch Doctor Eselskopf (literally ass's head) directly. Ah, you thief of a capuchin that I have fed so long! The devil fly away with the sun! What do I care for the sun?"


He called out so loudly and made such a noise that his friends and Toubac were quite frightened; old Rasimus alone kept her wits about her, and thrusting her grey hair back under her cap, she took a good pinch out of her pasteboard snuff-box, and observed most philosophically—

“The poor man is in pain all over. Do not alarm yourself, Mistress Grädel, don’t be frightened; the marks of the blows from the priest’s cudgel are to be seen on his back plain enough: stay at home and make a linseed poultice; I will go and call up Eselskopf; he is sure to put on him bandages soaked in brandy—that is the best remedy for a beating. I know it by experience.”

And out she went, murmuring—

“Good heavens, how tender those fat men are! I could have taken ten times as much without crying ‘Oh!’ That is the consequence of having such a white shining skin, like an ortolan.”

CHAPTER III.

AY was beginning to light up the ruinous-looking gable ends of the houses as Triebel Rasimus, gathering her rags about her, with her head hanging down, and the fringe of her cap falling over her red nose, trotted like an old hare along the lane of the Pot-Cassé, indistinctly muttering—

“What a treat we have had! My lord! what a feast! and I had my share of it,” continued she. “What a windfall! we shall have to wait now for six weeks, when

the vintage begins. Potatoes, carrots, and turnips will soon be here now; how I hate turnips! I cannot bear the smell of them. When I think there are people who can have omelettes and bacon, sour herrings and dried codfish every day for dinner, and whose life is one long feast! Only think!"

Then she began to muse aloud—

"Toubac has taken to me, that's clear," said she to herself. "I have captivated him, no doubt; I must get a firm hold on him and make him marry me. Then I shall be well off; he shall work like the water-dog of Huns the nailer, while I will quietly make my coffee every day by the fireside, and sit and roast chestnuts with Mother Schmutz and Mademoiselle Selapp, with a nice footwarmer under my petticoats, while Toubac is mending his pots and pans, and freezing outside. And so it ought to be—when one worships beauty one must make sacrifices accordingly."

And the old woman, as she made these reflections, twisted herself about and smiled in her grey beard; she fancied she already held the tinker in her talons.

Ten minutes afterwards Trievel Rasimus entered the Kapougnierstras, opposite a narrow house, with the two windows on the ground floor barred, and five or six uneven steps before the door.

"Here we are," said she.

She drew her snuff-box from her pocket and took a pinch, wiped her moustaches with her sleeve, and then scrambled up the steps of the house; she gave three blows with the knocker, which sounded far and wide in the silent streets.

She soon heard some one moving about the house.

"Eselkopf is putting on his slippers and his green

dressing-gown; he is afraid of catching cold," thought the old woman, winking her eye.

Then she listened, and hearing nothing she began knocking again, when a window on the first floor was opened, and a long lean yellow head, with a narrow forehead and hollow cheeks, surmounted by a pyramidal cotton nightcap, a large woollen comforter round a neck like a giraffe's, and a pair of shoulders protected by a green dressing-gown with large yellow flowers—in short, the head, the neck, the skinny arms of Doctor Eselskopf were protruded from the window. The worthy man, looking down into the street, began by saying—

"Who are you? What do you want? You must not stand knocking there until to-morrow—I am not deaf!"

"I beg your pardon, Doctor Eselskopf," said the old woman, "but you must come to Master Sebald Dick directly, at the Mayence Ham."

"Is Master Sebald ill?"

"Yes, doctor, his friend Johannes has given him such a thrashing that the poor dear man cannot move."

"Ah, ha! just as I expected," said Eselskopf, whose long yellow face was lighted up with a gleam of satisfaction. "The body burnt up by excess of alcohol, and now that the fire is beginning to declare itself he is obliged to send for me. Well, I will be there directly."

And Eselskopf left the window.

This doctor, the only one Bergzabern could boast, was as fond of water as Sebald was of wine. In fact, he had tried to get up a temperance society in the town as a set-off to drunkenness and excesses of the flesh. But the idea of founding a temperance society in a wine-growing country, and opposite the court of the Trabans!

With the exception of half-a-dozen victims to gout and gravel, and as many whimsical old maids, Eselskopf had made no proselytes. It was in vain he foretold the most frightful misfortunes to the friends of the Mayence Ham; not one of them was the least alarmed, and what was worse, they all continued to look as fat and as fresh, and to laugh and be as jolly as heretofore.

Master Eselskopf, who was as skinny as a cuckoo, and as yellow as a lemon, nourished a sort of secret grudge against Sebald, whose superabundant looks were a living criticism on his ideas about wine and good cheer. Judge then how pleased he was to hear that the fat man was in need of him at last; he triumphed in anticipation, and fancied he saw all the adherents of Bacchus already enlisted under his banner. While he was dressing, old Rasimus was thinking that a fire of spirituous liquors breaking out in one's stomach must be a terrible thing; and when, ten minutes after, the doctor stood at the door in his old black frieze coat, velvet breeches, silk stockings, and round-toed shoes with silver buckles, an ivory-headed cane in his hand, and his cocked hat on his head, she said to him in a tone of voice inviting him to make a confidant of her—

“Do you really think, Doctor Eselskopf, that Master Sebald has a fire in his body?”

“There is not the least doubt of it,” said he; “see the effects of intemperance; let it be a warning to you! How many times have I warned Master Sebald that he was casting himself into a gulf with neither bottom nor sides, through his abuse of wine and high living? Far from listening to my words, he always laughed at my healthful counsels, and was even so rude as to laugh in my face and call me a drinker of water, and an eater of

white cheese ! He will pray to God he had never eaten aught but white cheese, nor drank aught but water ! Instead of becoming so enormously corpulent, and having that purple face, which is a sign of impending apoplexy, he would now be in a most satisfactory state of health, and we should not now have to extinguish this general conflagration, which is nothing more nor less than a case of spontaneous combustion, as I have always foretold would take place.

“ When one thinks how much wine, how much beer, kirschwasser, and all sorts of spirituous liquors this man has consumed in the last twenty years, it is enough to make one shudder, and doubt whether all the waters of the Rhine and all the snows on the Mer de Glace could alleviate the internal inflammation which is now consuming him. It is incredible, it is something at once extraordinary and ominous. Well, I must do my best ; science has rendered it our painful duty to make the attempt. Should we be sufficiently fortunate to succeed it will be a wonderful cure, a marvel of its kind, and I shall send an account of it to all the medical schools in Europe.”

Eselskopf walked and talked in this fashion, addressing these reflections more to himself than to Triewel Rasimus.

The old woman, from what she could understand of the doctor's observations, looked upon Sebald as a dead man, and registered a private vow never to drink anything but water in future.

So they at last reached the court of the Trabans, where an unusual agitation reigned, for all Sebald's friends, at the news of his attack, had come thither still heavy from their drunken slumbers.

The tavern door stood open, people walked in and out, looked about them, told the same story over and over again, lifted their hands and eyes to heaven, cursed Johannes, and drank white wine to give themselves courage. Mistress Grédel wiped her eyes on her apron, while she gave an account of the battle to five or six female gossips who were hanging round her, while Christian, sitting inside the counter, was doing his best to console Fridoline, who was crying with all her might.

When Eselskopf and old Rasimus appeared under the archway a number of voices exclaimed—

“Here they are ! here they are !”

Eselskopf looked very serious ; as he crossed the court his eyes were caught by the tables at which Toubac and several others were tippling in the shade. At such a sight the worthy man seemed to feel horror-struck, and when he set his foot on the threshold of the Mayence Ham, halting for an instant, he said—

“Yes, here I am, here I am. When such people as these”—and he pointed to the winebibbers—“have passed ten, fifteen—nay, twenty years from morning till night in trifling with every poison in nature, and it at last happens to feel themselves all at once consumed by a burning fire in their entrails, which reaches even to the marrow in their bones, then in their distress they call out—‘Here he is ! here he is ! Save us !’ But we are not the Divinity, and what must burn, burns !”

He seemed inclined to go on speaking, but as Toubac quietly replied as he emptied his glass, “Your health, Mr. Eselskopf,” he only shook his head and asked for the sick man.

Poor Mistress Grédel, in tears, conducted him up the

old staircase of the tavern, and all her gossips followed her in a sort of religious meditation.

Sebald's bedchamber opened on to the head of the stairs in the ancient wormeaten gallery : it was a lofty and wide room lighted from the court by two windows. On the right was an old carved clothes-press with bright iron mountings ; on the left a large canopied bed, with sky-blue curtains, and in this bed lay Sebald, his head raised up on pillows, and a pile of cushions under his back, only his purple nose and his great pumpkin-shaped cheeks being visible under a cotton nightcap. The fat man's face expressed consternation ; he hardly saw Eselskopf enter before he groaned out—

“ Save me, Mr. Eselskopf—you are my refuge in trouble ; that beggarly capuchin has broken my bones ; I cannot even turn my head. Ah, the vagabond ! A man, too, that I loved like my own brother ! ”

Eselskopf, without saying a word, deposited his cocked hat in the window seat, and his cane in a corner ; then, turning up his yellow ruffles, he slowly walked up to the bed and began to feel Master Sebald's pulse, who watched his motions with eyes of dread. The learned doctor, with his bald, narrow, cadaverous forehead, his staring eyes, his pinched-up lips, his chin buried in his white cravat, seemed absorbed in reflection.

Behind, Grédel, Toubac, Hans Aden, and a dozen old women waited, looking at each other. Fridoline was afraid to go upstairs for fear of hearing there were no hopes of her father's recovery. And as Eselskopf continued dumb, Sebald's terror increased every second. At last he could hold out no longer ; he was just about to cry out—“ Is there no chance for me ? ” when at last the doctor nodded his head.

"Latent fever, irregular pulse, sudden starting of the tendons, gastric symptoms, difficulty in breathing."

And so he went on, until Sebald, who grew paler at every symptom enumerated, cried out—

"Have I got every complaint that ever was known, then?"

"You have not all of them," said Eselskopf; "you are too used-up, exhausted—I may add too annihilated by the immoderate usage of strong drinks—to have them all, but you have a good half of them, and those the worst."

Sebald wanted to make an observation, but his tongue refused its office, and he could not utter a word.

"Ah!" said Mistress Grédel, "to think that horrid Father Johannes is the cause of it all!"

"No, Madame Dick, no," cried Eselskopf with dignity; "do not attribute your husband's present state to the blows he received from that man's cudgel. 'Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.' The cause of this evil is long anterior to the events of last night. The cause of this evil, I repeat, dates fifteen, twenty, or perhaps thirty years back; all the liqueurs and all the wine Monsieur Dick has absorbed have sown in him the seeds of all sorts of complaints, so that in uniting these germs have formed in his body a sort of egg containing the seeds of every infirmity—a Pandora's box, in fact. Yesterday in that egg were contained the gout, gravel, sciatica, rheumatic affections of the joints, gastritis, serous apoplexy and blood to the head, general and partial paralysis, and a number of other diseases too long to enumerate now. All that was contained in the egg, Madame Dick; the

egg must be hatched sooner or later ; it might have gone on two or three, or six months, perhaps a year longer. I am not prepared to deny that the blows from Father Johannes' cudgel may have broken the egg, but the contents were there already, and the capuchin did not convey them thither ; it is Master Sebald lying here now who put them there and laid them himself."

"Is there no remedy, then?" cried Mistress Grédel, clasping her hands.

"Yes, Madame Dick, there is a remedy common to all complaints—a remedy which cures every disease, all human infirmities ; this remedy is the opposite of wine, which is the source of all misery ; it is water, Madame Dick—water, whose virtues ungrateful men ignore—it is to water we must have recourse."

And then Master Sebald, at last recovering his voice, said—

"If you can only cure me, I will drink water. Yes, I will drink, though I have been out of practice for a long time."

"You shall be cured," said Eselskopf firmly ; "but it may last some time, for to destroy the germs of disease you may have to drink as much water as you have wine. Now as you have drunk nothing but wine for the last twenty or thirty years, and sometimes six, seven, eight, or ten bottles a day, only just calculate the quantity of water you will have to drink."

Then the face of Sebald, who had begun to look a little relieved, became very gloomy, his cheeks sank, and he stammered out—

"Anyhow I cannot drink more than ten pints a day, and if that is to go on for thirty years I shall be too old to take to drinking wine again."

Eselskopf was very angry at this observation.

"Wine!" he cried; "are you still thinking about wine-drinking? In that case I have only to take my leave."

He had already taken up his hat and stick, when Grédel and all the spectators implored him to remain. He allowed himself to be persuaded, and ordered them to apply ice-water bandages immediately to Master Sebald's back, to be renewed every quarter of an hour. As for fluids, fresh water; and for all food, spinach, sorrel, and greens boiled in water. He interdicted potatoes as being too nourishing, and warned Grédel that the slightest infraction of this regime would infallibly kill Master Sebald, as surely as if it were poison.

Then he left the room in a most dignified manner, and I leave you to judge the grimace and reflections of Master Sebald when they put the ice-cold bandages on his back for the first time, and gave him his first glass of water to console him.

"Ah! gracious Lord!" cried he, "what have I done to deserve such a fate? Grédel! Grédel! this cold linen makes me shiver. I have lost all feeling. Oh, that villain Johannes! Eselskopf may say what he likes; had it not been for him that egg would have lasted a long time, and that wretch Johannes made it burst. And now all my past sins are reappearing by hundreds!"

And every time they gave him a glass of water the poor man made a horrible grimace.

"Water—always water!" he groaned. "I can stand it no longer, and it is water which alone can bring me round. If it was only red I could at least look at it;

but clear water, nothing to look at—my poor stomach is shivering! And then this spinach, this sorrel, and these boiled greens—always the same; I shall hate the sight of every green thing! Who ever would have believed I should come to this? I am sure if I could see my own face I should be frightened.”

The truth is the poor man became thinner every day; his fat melted away, his great nose became blue, and his triple chin disappeared and only left a sort of transparent frill which hung down on his breast.

“Never mind, Sebald, keep up your courage,” said his wife. “See, I have brought you what you like best, your own fine cabbage, instead of that sorrel, which sets your teeth on edge.”

“My cabbage, my fine cabbage! You are laughing at me, Grédel; it is a shame to joke with a poor sick man.”

“See now, Sebald, keep yourself quiet. If you get angry and complain after five days’ illness, what will you do when it has lasted five or six months? You must be patient.”

These judicious reflections so stupefied Sebald that he could not find words to answer; and sometimes when Fridoline, with her eyes red from crying, came to see him, he looked at her for a long time, and then a tear trickled slowly down his cheek.

“You see, my child, you see to what a state your poor father is reduced,” he used to murmur; “he is only the shadow of what he was, but a shadow who loves you very dearly, and who wishes to see you happy, my dear child. In my miserable state, with cold water on my back and only spinach in my stomach, I can still find strength to love you.”

Then the two began sobbing together ; it was quite heartbreaking.

As to Eselskopf, he came regularly twice a day, and when he saw Sebald growing thinner, weaker, and paler every day, he said—

“Good, good ! going on well—very well indeed ! As the spinach and sorrel have such a good effect you must go on with them, and if the sorrel sets the sick man’s teeth on edge, confine yourselves to the spinach.”

It would be impossible to describe Sebald’s face when he heard all this. His eyes glared, his cheeks grew paler than ever ; he was choking with rage and indignation ; the sight of Eselskopf made him shiver ; he could not separate the idea of that man and cold water in his mind ; he hated both, and sometimes he fancied that Eselskopf was taking his revenge on him, which exasperated him to a degree it is not possible to describe.

CHAPTER IV.



THE report of these strange events, of the great battle, of the blows received, and of Master Sebald’s illness, had spread over the country, and then it was seen how many friends the worthy tavern-keeper had on the left bank of the Rhine.

In fact, the following Sunday a numerous crowd of people came to drink his wine and inquire after his health. They came from a distance of five, six, and even ten leagues. There were old men in periwigs, with bowed backs and crooked knees, with blue noses, wearing the old-fashioned cocked hat ; there were many

more young ones, and even some women who came from Pirmasens and Landau. All these good fellows met in procession under the arch of the Trabans' Gate; they shook hands quietly, and then took their way to the tavern, where Mistress Grédel received them with tears in her eyes, begging them to sit down at the long tables without making any noise, for Master Sebald could not bear to hear the gurgling of the bottles and the sound of knives and forks, since he drank nothing but water and was fed on vegetables.

About one, fifty or sixty of these good fellows afforded a very affecting scene; they were all drinking and talking with such decorum that it really brought tears into one's eyes. One extolled Sebald's kindness of heart, another his right way of thinking, and another his invariable good temper.

The old registrar, Frantz Schloute, the best judge of wine in the Rhinegau, told them how he saw him the day he came to Bergzabern, merely a journeyman wincedresser; all he had in the world was his leathern apron, red waistcoat, and pruning-bill, but with plenty of good sense, and endowed with a great appetite and corresponding thirst; how he made a lucky marriage with Grédel Baltzer, cook at the grand hotel of the Eagle, through his love of red wine, ham, and veal patties, which was a proof, as he observed, of very great judgment on Sebald's part; how he first started in business in the Tanners' Lane, at the sign of the Three Herrings, where the charcoal-burners and timber-dealers first made his reputation; but afterwards, becoming more ambitious, he sold that small tavern in order to buy the property of the old synagogue, which was quite a stroke of genius, for since then his business

had gone on increasing every day, for every one now patronised the court of the Trabans.

"And since then, thanks be to Heaven," added the worthy registrar, "the old court has been more run after than the church. You see," said he, "good wine, good-humour, and good food give good digestion; now good digestion contributes more than three-fourths towards health, pleasure, and prosperity in this world."

Every one acknowledged the truth of these remarks.

Then others related Master Sebald's exploits at the great meeting at the Bottle of Rudesheim. In such a year he vanquished all the vine-dressers, even the famous Sexomen from Neustadt. Another year he put all his adversaries under the table; a tun of wine had no terrors for him, for he ate in proportion to his liquor, which the others could not. Then they talked about his successful speculations, his vast stores, his cellar, the coolest in Bergzabern, and at last, just as three was struck at Saint Sylvester's Church, old Zaphéri Mutz proposed they should all go and see him; it would surely give him great pleasure; they would wish him a speedy recovery, and express their hope of seeing him soon back again among his old comrades, with a wine-can in his hand, which could not fail to do his heart good. They unanimously assented to this proposal; Mistress Grédel in vain assured them that he wanted rest.

"Nonsense," said Zaphéri, "we know him of old; why, the pleasure of seeing us would go far towards setting him up again."

So Grédel was very unwillingly obliged to go and tell Sebald that his old friends were coming to march round his bed and shake hands with him. Sebald had just swallowed his eighth pint of water when he was told

this news. He looked as broken and pale as the others were jolly and red-faced; his purple nose had acquired a violet tint, from internal chill; consternation was plainly visible in his eyes. Before he had time to say anything, the door opened, and his former jolly companions of old times filed in two by two, saying—

“Ha! ha! Master Sebald, how are you getting on? So you are ill at last!—that does not happen often!—never mind, it is not much!”

But hardly had they looked at him when their voices failed them; a cold shiver ran down their backs; several turned to the door to make their escape. Was it possible that a man so fat, so rosy, so fresh-looking only a week ago, could have been brought so low? It did not seem natural. The later arrivals pushed forward the others, and the room was soon full of these good livers, with open mouths and staring eyes, looking at him in silent terror.

Zaphéri Mutz had meditated a few words of encouragement to the sick man, but he had no courage to begin, and could only stammer out—

“Ah! that rascally capuchin! My poor Sebald, what a state he has put you in!—it makes my hair stand on end.”

“Yes, yes,” ejaculated poor Sebald, who was singularly frightened when he saw the stupefied look all their faces wore; “yes, it won’t last much longer—I cannot hold together—I am going—I am not even strong enough to cough—ho! ho! ho! what a misfortune, what a misfortune!”

“That scoundrelly capuchin!” cried several voices at once—“the miserable wretch! If we had been there it would never have happened!”

“Ah!” said Sebald, “he would have exterminated every one of you to the last man. You don’t know his power! It is the Lord Himself. It is the angel of the Lord who is punishing me for my numberless sins, my slothfulness, my drunkenness, my gluttony, and my blasphemies against His holy name. Father Johannes would never have had such strength of himself. His cudgel cut my back as if it had been a sword; and now here I lie—the Lord’s will be done—yes, sweet Jesus, Thy will be done! I do not repine—I acknowledge Thy justice—I renounce Satan, his pomps and vanities! It is all over—I know it well—the measure has been full for a long time—it has overflowed through my own fault—my very great fault. I blasphemed, and the tempests are let loose upon me!”

He spoke in this way through the horrible dread he had of dying; one might have sworn, looking at his clasped hands and violet nose, that he was already a saint in Paradise.

“Stuff!” said Zaphéri Mutz, who was as pale as death himself; “you will get over it, Master Sebald—you may still recover.”

“No, Zaphéri, no, I feel my end approaching. My only wish now is that you should profit by my example for your own conversion, for we all have been leading a very criminal life, and you must renounce the vain good things of the earth. Look at me—what does it advantage me now that I possess farms, vineyards, mills, cellars, old Rudesheim, Markobrunner, Johannisberg, and many other wines, which I had laid by for the gratification of my palate and the perdition of my soul? All that is as nothing now for Frantz Christian Sebald Dick. Alas! it is all vanity of vanities.”

They all began to cry when they heard this. Every one said—

“Master Sebald is a godly man; we never thought so before; he talks like a prophet!”

There could be nothing more edifying, especially when one recollected that only a week before the worthy tavern-keeper had declared that a man must be of weak intellect if he believed in anything but the divinity of the sun.

This is how such reflections, inspired by cold water, can bring a man back to healthier opinions, and this is why holy anchorites are always represented living on roots in the desert. It is a symbol—a sort of pictorial apologue.

Nevertheless the friends of the Mayence Ham were in consternation at such a change, and made very dismal reflections on their own account.

“The same thing may happen to us,” they thought; “all the wine we have been drinking may any day turn to vinegar with us too. Then, instead of being fresh and rosy, we shall collapse like an empty bladder, which will be for each of us in particular, and for all of us in general, the abomination of desolation prophesied by the Holy Scriptures.”

Now these reflections, though very judicious, did not seem very lively; on the contrary they became consequently very melancholy; they all, one after the other, stole quietly out of the room, went downstairs into the court, and thence into the street, and walked off with heads down without looking right or left. At the end of twenty minutes Master Sebald was alone in his room with old Basimus and Grédel, who plied their knitting in silence, Christian, who was in a reverie, and little Fridoline,

who had cried so much that she had no more tears to shed. All the old comrades were gone, which proves that if flax when green attracts the sparrows and the chaffinches, the scarecrow of misfortune soon frightens them away.

CHAPTER V

THE desertion of Master Sebald by his friends had a strange effect in Bergzabern; a report was spread that Eselskopf's prophecies had been fulfilled, and that the worthy tavern-keeper, from his former excesses, had fallen into an incurable state of depression; that he had fallen away to a skeleton; that he was dying, that he drivelled, and was melting away like butter before the fire. Good people therefore ascribed the effects of the deplorable regime of cold water and vegetables to red wine. The temperance society at last began to look up, the adherents of wine were dismayed, and Eselskopf, thanks to his perseverance, triumphed all along the line.

Farewell to cock-fighting and bear-baiting, farewell to the fêtes of St. Magloire, St. Pancrace, St. Boniface, St. Crispin, St. Cyprian, and all those saints in the calendar whose days Master Sebald used to celebrate with such magnificence. Farewell to asparagus and vintage feasts; no more sack races, no more drinking bouts in autumn—farewell to them all.

“Now it is all over,” said the true supporters of the Mayence Ham—the basket-makers, nailers, cobblers, old men, tinkers, tinder-sellers, Hans Aden, Toubac, Paul Borbès, and a hundred others to whom the

ancient and respectable tavern had become a second existence. Desolation was among them, consternation painted on their faces. Far from forsaking Master Sebald, they relieved one another in the great room, speaking in whispers, discussing the prescriptions, asking for hourly information about the sick man's health, wiping their eyes with their coat-sleeves every time there was a change for the better, and in despair when he had passed a bad night.

Mother Rasimus alone was allowed to sit up with the patient. Every time she peeped out of the door opening on to the old wormeaten gallery, they made signs to her to come down; then she drew her rags about her, and throwing back her tattered cap-ribbons she leaned over the balustrade and whispered that he was better, or worse, he would not take any more sorrel—he was in a rage with Eselskopf.

Such were the reports from morning till night in the ancient synagogue yard, and which made these poor devils either rejoice or lament.

As long as Master Sebald suffered the pains in his back and loins arising from the blows of Father Johannes' cudgel, which lasted nearly a fortnight, he submitted most resignedly to the doctor's treatment; but very shortly the sight of Eselskopf's face became hateful to him. At every visit he turned his face to the wall that he might not see him; and when he heard him repeat every day, "He is going on well, continue the vegetables," his indignation waxed greater and greater. But what drove him to despair more than anything was when one evening Eselskopf, remarking his excessive paleness and his vacant look, began to smile, and showing his yellow teeth, said—

“Monsieur Dick, I will answer for your recovery at last; you are in a fair way to get about again; one or two months of the same regime, and all your fluids will be in equilibrium, your other complaints will have disappeared, and you will have such a waist as this.”

Eselskopf pinched himself above the hips with his long bony fingers with an air of admiration at his own waist.

“Go to the devil!” muttered Sebald as he turned himself round in despair.

All night he never closed an eye. He fancied he saw himself as lean as Eselskopf, and dared not raise his eyes.

“How can I ever show myself again before decent people?” said he to himself. “What must they think of me? All those I knew before will point their fingers at me—I shall be obliged to hide myself. The little tailor will seem a giant compared with me, and old Diederich Sauffer can knock me down with a tap on the nose. I would rather die than be exposed to such affronts!”

Now in the course of the morning Trievel Rasimus came as usual to relieve Grédel after sitting up all night. For some time she had changed her mind about Eselskopf; she thought him an ass; and the fear with which she had at first regarded him had been quite dissipated.

“That rascal,” said she to herself, raising her apron and taking a long wicker-covered bottle out of her pocket—“that rascal Eselskopf, he has bewitched them all. And I, too, I must take to drinking water—he! he! he! Yes, my poor Trievel, I will treat you to some water, to clear your complexion, I will.”

Then she put the bottle to her lips and took a most satisfactory draught, then smacked her lips and slipped the bottle back into her pocket.

“Very good spring water!”

Then she began to twist herself about as if she was dancing a “Hopser” with Toubac. But she was careful not to utter a syllable of her opinion about Eselskopf to Mistress Grädel, who looked on him as an oracle.

“Not so silly as that comes to,” thought she; “they would turn me out of the house, and I could be of no farther service to Master Sebald, who is the best of good fellows—poor dear man, he is only skin and bone. What ought he to have? Some good beef-tea to put some life into him. So they give him a glass of cold water instead. Oh! that rascal Eselskopf, he is worse than the capuchin’s cudgel!”

So that morning Triel Rasimus sat knitting and pondering as usual in the window corner. A splendid ray of purple and golden sunlight shone on the panes through the foliage of a lofty acacia which grew in the court; a flock of noisy sparrows were quarrelling; you could hear them chattering, squabbling, and then fly away at the least noise. The old woman thrust her knitting-needles through her grey hair, then looked to see what was going on on the tiles. She noticed the cat belonging to her neighbour Yeri-Peter—a great tortoiseshell cat—going her morning rounds at the garret windows; the lovely white clouds sailing along in the blue sky; she thought of the coming vintage; then she looked at Master Sebald under the shadow of the bed canopy, and began her work once more.

Sometimes the jingle of bottles and glasses reached

the room though the door was closed, and Mistress Grédel begged her customers to make as little noise as possible. Then the sick man raised his eyelids, listened, gave a long-drawn sigh, and threw a glance of dismay at the water-bottle on the chimney between two large clean glasses.

"Horrible!" he murmured—"horrible!"

For a moment he could hold out no longer; he made an attempt to draw the curtain, and seeing the old woman sitting there all alone, he began by saying—

"I should like to be buried under the Schlossgarten. I have had enough of spinach and sorrel already. Look here, Trievel, as my wife and Fridoline are not here, I don't mind saying so to you—I would rather die at once than go on water-drinking. I have done it long enough. If it is to come to an end, if I am never to go down into the tavern again, unless I go there feet foremost—well, I should prefer finishing at once with a bottle of Rudesheimer or Johannisberg; that would, at all events, be a death worthy of Sebald Dick. But to die of water-drinking—fie! Only when I think of it, it makes me sick. There was a time when I would have broken a jug on any man's head who dared to hint at such a thing!"

The good man spoke in such a tone of conviction, and in such pathetic accents, that Trievel Rasimus was moved. He turned round, they looked at one another for two or three seconds most expressively, then the old woman got up, laid her knitting down in the window seat, and gently opened the door. He could see across the gallery, in the obscurity of the tavern, Hans Aden, Toubac, and several others, sitting with their elbows on the table, looking very melancholy, and emptying their

glasses in silence, Mistress Grédel sitting pensively with her hands on her knees behind the counter, and Fridoline close to her; then when she felt sure of not being interrupted, she walked up to the bed and smiled at Master Sebald with a curious look on her face.

"Wine," she began; "good Lord! Give you wine, did you say? Why, it would be your death, Master Sebald! If you asked me for water, well and good. I don't say I would not give you some Sonneberg water. Yes, I should not mind giving you a little, though it is rather strong for an invalid."

"Sonneberg water!" stammered Sebald.

"Yes, perhaps you never tasted it; it's a water—very good water for the eyes, and all other bodily infirmities, Master Sebald; so good that my grandmother Anna, who never missed taking at least two pints a day, was able to read her almanac without spectacles when she was eighty."

And as Master Sebald made her no answer, he was so disgusted with all the water in the world, she took her flask from her pocket, and said—

"I went last night and fetched this little bottle on purpose for you—he, he, he!—here, just taste that!"

The poor tavern-keeper turned his head with a look of despair, but the neck of the bottle had hardly approached his lips, when, quickly raising himself on his elbow, with trembling hands he snatched the flask from the old woman and began to drink, his eyes almost out of his head, in a state of ecstasy impossible to describe—his throat swelled up, and subsided again like that of a nightingale singing his love songs. It was a pleasure to look at him; he finished the last drop with a sigh of regret. The old woman with her

vinous look peeped at him quite tenderly through the curtains.

"Well," said she, taking the empty bottle back and slipping it into her pocket—"well, what do you think of Sonneberg water? Has it done you any good? Can you see better than you did?"

"Yes, yes," said the good man; "it has cleared my eyes and my ideas too. Why, Trievel, it is like the water from the miraculous pool which cured the paralytic—have you got any more of that water?"

"Be quiet and I will get you some."

"Mind, a large bottle, big enough to hold two pints."

"Yes, Master Sebald, yes," said the old woman, laughing heartily.

"And you will put it away behind the bed?"

"Don't be uneasy; but you must not take too much at a time—if anything happened to you I should be lost."

"Oh, nothing will happen to me, Trievel; what good water! You must go and fetch me some of this water every day from—from the Sonneberg isn't it, where it rises?" said he, winking his eye.

"Yes, under the Sonneberg rocks at the foot of the hill."

"Good! good; I thought so; it must come from there. Ah! if I only had another bottle of it I should be cured at once."

"Silence," said Trievel Rasimus, hastily resuming her knitting; "Madame Grédel is coming."

Master Sebald turned his face to the wall again, and pretended to go to sleep, while the old woman took her seat by the window again.

It was not only Grédel, Fridoline, and Christian who

entered the room, but Doctor Eselskopf also, who came to make his daily visit.

"He is asleep," said the old woman.

Eselskopf nodded, laid his cocked hat on the table, placed his cane in the corner, then going up to the bed, he quietly raised the bedclothes and felt the sick man's pulse. They were all looking at him; he seemed very much surprised, and in about a minute he turned round and said—

"What have you been giving to Monsieur Dick?"

"Water and sorrel," replied Madame Grédel.

"Nothing but water and sorrel?"

"Nothing, doctor."

He felt his pulse again, and then considered for a moment.

"It is really extraordinary; I said so before; there is actually too much nourishment in water. This is a fact which deserves to be communicated to the Medical Annals of Hundsrück."

And out he went suddenly, with care on his brow and pinched-up lips, leaving his hat on the table. Christian ran after him.

"Here, Monsieur Eselskopf, you have forgotten your hat and your stick. What is he to have to-day? You have given no instructions."

"Ah, well, you must reduce the spinach by half, and not give him so much water; water is delicious and excellent in itself, but not too much of it."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, I shall call again to-morrow; I must tlink a little."

Eselskopf departed.

All the spectators were uneasy, especially old Rasi-

mus, who could not help admiring the doctor's penetration.

"He is cleverer than I thought he was," said she to herself.

Nevertheless, as Master Sebald seemed none the worse for it, and Grédel had installed herself in the sick-room, the old woman made it her business to go and fetch some more Sonneberg water, as she had promised Sebald she would.

CHAPTER VI.



TRIEVEL RASIMUS had not left the room a quarter of an hour before Sebald, thanks to the goodness of the water he had been drinking, was in a profound sleep. Until eight in the evening the good fellow dreamed of nothing but vintages, cock-fights, feasts, entertainments, and banquets. Sometimes he was cutting up a magnificent brown pasty, which diffused a delicious smell. Then again he was standing in his waggon returning from the vintage among his great iron-bound casks, and crowned with vine-leaves, holding a tankard full of foaming wine, and singing the glory of his divinity the sun; Father Johannes by his side, like an old faun belonging to the family, was dancing little Fridoline in his arms, while Christian marched behind the waggon with his cap over his ear and his cheeks puffed out, blowing a long bark trumpet. Then he suddenly found himself in the ancient court of the Trabans, among a lot of wicker cages; his cock, the Little Vinedresser, had won a

great battle over the Dutch Admiral of the burgo-master Omacht, and the air was filled with shouts of delight.

Amidst these pleasant dreams indistinct words betrayed Sebald's agitation; Dame Grédel and Fridoline were not free from uneasiness. But towards evening his breathing became calm and regular, and then quiet as a child's.

At last, as the clock of Saint Sylvester struck eight, he awoke, yawned, stretched himself, and at the same moment his eyes met those of old Rasimus, who had already returned, and was sitting knitting at the corner of the window. She made him a signal which conveyed the information that the flask was in the cupboard, which caused him inexpressible satisfaction.

"Grédel!" he began.

"So you are awake at last."

"Yes, I feel quite well again! That Eselskopf is a clever fellow—he has saved my life. You may go quietly to bed now—I do not want you."

He told them this to get rid of Grédel and Fridoline, that he might have the flask in his hands again.

"Wouldn't you like to have something to eat?"

"Yes, I could eat a chitterling, or an omelet, or a——"

"Chitterling!" cried Dame Grédel. "Good Lord! he must be mad! If you have such ideas as these, Sebald, you will never get well."

The good man felt he had committed himself, and trying to laugh it off—

"It was only a joke, Grédel," said he; "God forbid I should want either chitterlings, or black puddings, or anything else of the sort! Nothing but greens, or

sorrel, or spinach for me. But go to bed now. Trievel, tell Grédel to go to bed; it pains me to see her always sitting up with me; and poor little Fridoline, how red her eyes are! Come and kiss me, my child—come and kiss your father, and then go to bed. Am I not right, Trievel?”

“Yes, Monsieur Dick, I have told Dame Grédel a hundred times she would kill herself. She must have proper rest.”

But Grédel unconsciously suspected something wrong.

“Fridoline sat up half last night,” said she; “Trievel shall sit up to-morrow; we will take our turns at sitting up with you.”

“But,” said Sebald, “it worries me to have any one sitting up with me; and the candle keeps me awake.”

“I will put it behind the curtain,” replied Grédel promptly. “Good night, Trievel; good night, Fridoline.”

So, in spite of all, old Rasimus was forced to go. With her usual cunning she saw she would only confirm Grédel in her suspicions had she insisted on remaining. So she got up, yawned, and said—

“Well, good-bye for the present, Master Sebald. I shall not be sorry to have a good night’s rest; I shall sleep enough for to-night and to-morrow too.”

And Fridoline having kissed her father, they left the room together, while Grédel placed the light on the window-ledge and began to knit.

Master Sebald was beside himself with thirst and indignation.

“How annoying it is to have such a good wife!” said he to himself. “She is so fond of me that she would keep me on vegetables and water all my life; did any

one ever know such ill-luck? This is worse than Father Johannes' affection, for he intended to have finished me at once. What shall I do now to get hold of the flask? If I move, if I stretch my arm out, she will look at me, she will see it, and then she will make a disturbance and drive old Rasimus away, while I shall be left all alone with my good wife on one side of me and Eselskopf on the other."

These ideas passed through his brain one after the other; he heard the knitting-needles at work without ceasing, he could see Grédel's profile delineated on the curtain, he listened to the ticking of the clock for awhile, and his impatience became every moment greater.

"In the name of Heaven, Grédel!" said he, after an hour had passed thus, "I beg you will go to bed. It makes my heart ache to see you sitting up like that. You have grown thin—you are not the same woman—you will end by being ill."

He spoke so naturally and so affectionately that Grédel was affected by it.

"Don't think about me, Sebald," said she; "try and go to sleep."

"You cannot think, Grédel, how pleased I should be if you would go to bed. I feel quite well again; but I cannot endure seeing you there, my poor wife; it upsets me, and I keep saying to myself, 'How good Grédel is—she is wearing herself out for my sake.' In Heaven's name go to bed. Listen; it is striking eleven; if you will go to bed I shall soon go to sleep."

Grédel, who was really worn out, at last gave up the point. She laid down her work, and stretched herself on the sofa opposite the alcove, saying—

"I will try and sleep a little, Sebald, just to please you. Should you be in want of anything——"

"I will call you—I will cry out soon enough."

"You need not cry; only say 'Grédel,' and I shall be with you."

The good woman having extinguished the light, Sebald waited patiently a long quarter of an hour, then he gently, very gently, got possession of the flask, and drank till he was satisfied. After which, pleased with his triumph, and smiling to himself, he began to snore like an alderman.

It was broad daylight when good Dame Grédel was awakened by unaccustomed sounds. She listened, thinking that Kasper, the tavern-waiter, was singing as he washed his cans and his glasses, which he did every morning about six, but what was her surprise to hear Master Sebald himself singing Karl Ritter's air—

"Ah! 'tis pleasant beneath the vines!

Trela, lala, lala, lala."

"Gracious Heaven!" cried she, "Sebald is gone mad!"

But he very quietly made answer—

"No, Grédel, not by any means; I may have been when I sent for Eselskopf, but at this moment I am in full possession of my faculties. Trela, lala!"

In spite of this assurance to the contrary, Grédel slipped on her dress in a hurry, muttering as she did so—

"Eselskopf—at once we must send for Eselskopf."

Just as she opened the door old Rasimus, who was coming to relieve her, appeared at the end of the gallery.

"The Lord Himself has sent you, Trievel!" cried the poor woman.

"Why? what has happened?" asked the old woman, not very much alarmed, as she knew how timid Grédel was.

Sebald, lying in bed, heard all this, and called out—

"Why, Trievel, it happens my wife has lost her head. Grédel, are you not ashamed of frightening people? Go—I thought you had more sense."

Rasimus came in, her hands hidden under her shawl, the yellow trimmings to her cap hanging down over her eyebrows; she looked at Sebald, and smiled.

"The good man is doing wonderfully well," she began. "What have you been talking about, Dame Grédel? He has not looked so fresh and well for a long time. Come hither, Fridoline, come and look at him. The poor dear man looks twenty years younger since yesterday."

Fridoline came running in with her white petticoat, then Christian, who had just arrived to hear how Sebald was, then Kasper the waiter, and Soffayel the cook; and Sebald, with the colour come back into his cheeks, smiled at every one like a great baby just awake, and staring about him in his cradle.

"Ha! ha!" said he at last, "no more vegetables for me. Hum! hum! I am doing well, wonderfully well."

Then, looking at Mother Rasimus, he looked rather disconcerted; he held out his hand to her without speaking.

"Do you want to feel my pulse?" asked the old woman, laughing.

"No, Trievel, no; thank God you want no one to feel your pulse to find you have a good heart. I only want to give you a kiss, Trievel; come here and let me kiss you."

And the old woman, affected in her turn, replied—

“I ask nothing better if it can give you any pleasure, Monsieur Dick ; you are a fine man—there is nothing to be ashamed of.”

And he embraced her.

Grédel looked stupefied with astonishment.

Then the tavern-keeper, recovering himself a little, said—

“Grédel, and you, Fridoline, look at that good old Trievel Rasimus ; look at her well, for she has saved my life. You remember how weak, pale, and miserable I looked yesterday. I had not a drop of blood in my veins ; it was that rascal Eselskopf who had put me in such a state. Well, I have reflected a great deal since yesterday, I have thought about many things ; the blows of Father Johannes’ cudgel were nothing ; what did I want ? A poultice on the back, a plain poultice, and at the end of three or four days there would have been nothing to see but a few yellow and green marks, just as when one gets a blow on the face. Instead of that, the beggarly doctor wanted to dry up my body, that he might say to every one in Bergzabern, ‘Look at that thin, tall, yellow-looking man who coughs as he walks along, who has neither arms, nor calves to his legs, and only resembles a broomstick—that is Frantz Christian Sebald Dick ; you know who I mean—fat Sebald, that is he ; well, I saved his life ; had it not been for me and fresh water he would have been a dead man—let that be a warning to you.’ And they would have been frightened, and every one would have taken to water-drinking, and Eselskopf would have written a great book about me and his vegetable and water treatment ; he would have been proud of it, and would have

been sent for to Munich, and Vienna, and Berlin to cure all the fat people there. Ah! I have often thought all about this—yes, that is the state of the case. The vagabond! I wish he was here. Fortunately his plot has miscarried, and I owe it to her, to Trievel herself, that I am alive now. I owe her my happiness, my health, and my life. Look here!”

He took an enormous flask out of the cupboard, and holding it up with an air of adoration—

“It is with that she cured me! Oh, Rasimus! Rasimus! never shall I forget that I owe it to you that I can now see the light of day! I am not angry with you, Grédel, but God has given you no brains; Eselskopf had made you believe that vegetables and water would save my life. You believed him, and I cannot blame you; but only let him come here again—let him come, and I shall have a few minutes’ private conversation with him!”

The good man paused for want of breath; then looking at Fridoline, who was shedding tears of joy at the end of the bed, he beckoned to her to come to him, and held her a long time against his heart in silence. Christian was not the most unmoved spectator of this scene; Master Sebald saw him standing pale and motionless against the window.

“Come hither, boy,” said he; “come a little nearer. You were not one of those who forsook me either. You have been here every day to hear how I was getting on. Don’t be uneasy—don’t be uneasy. Sebald Dick is not ungrateful. I have something for you which will please you.”

He looked at Fridoline, who was still leaning on his shoulder, and Christian began to tremble so that for a

few seconds he could not find a word to say. At last he began—

“You know, Master Sebald, I loved you and your family for a very long time.”

“Yes, I know that very well, and we will talk about it again by-and-by.”

Then, turning to old Rasimus—

“Trievel,” said he, laughing, “do not think I pay people with fine words only. You must understand there is a place at my table for you every day as long as we either of us live. By God’s grace you shall have no other care than that of your glass and knife and fork. Should I unfortunately die before you, Grédel and Fridoline will be here still to keep my promise to you.”

“That,” said the delighted old woman, “is too good to refuse, Master Sebald; on the contrary, I should say what I did not mean if I thought of refusing such an offer.”

“Yes, but that is not all, Trievel; I must make you a present in the place of this excellent flask, which I intend to keep as a souvenir. I have made up my mind about that since last night. You must ask me for something, I don’t care what. See now, tell me what you would like. If you asked for my vineyard at Kilian, or even the Fromuhle mill, you should have it, for you are a good woman, and no fool as most are.”

Old Rasimus became very grave as he said this; she coloured up, and her long nose, her cheeks, and her temples became scarlet; she had never been in such a dilemma in her life. But it soon wore off, and drawing her pasteboard snuff-box from the depths of her pocket, she closed her left eye, and slowly took a pinch, and

looked round at every one who was waiting for her to speak, saying to herself—

“Now Trievel is become rich she will be the best match in Bergzabern after Mademoiselle Fridoline.”

She looked and saw all their attentive faces, and ended by replying—

“Since I must form a wish—well, we will see what it will be some other time. I don’t know much about it, and the same thing might happen to me as to the old woman and the three puddings. First she wished for a pudding, and it came; then, being in a rage, she wished it on her husband’s nose; then she was obliged to spend her last wish in getting it off again. I must think it over. If it were of any use to wish myself thirty years younger, with a handsome young husband, I should do so at once, but at any time of life I must think about it.”

“Think about it, then,” said Sebald, laughing. “And now, Christian, you must go to Purrhus, the watchman, and tell him to cry all through the town, at the corner of every street, that Frantz Christian Sebald Dick is recovered, and that he invites all his friends and acquaintances to a grand banquet next Sunday week in order to celebrate his restoration to health, and to return thanks to the Lord. Tell him to stop under Eselskopf’s windows, and to blow his horn till he shows himself, that he may see all his tricks have ended in nothing—that I laugh at him, and intend to drink wine—old wine—the best Rudesheimer I have, to make up for lost time. Go, Christian, and be back again soon, for Grédel must prepare us a nice fry to celebrate my recovery. I fancy I hear the butter in the frying-pan already—ha, ha, ha!”

"Sebald," said Grédel reproachfully, "be careful; you must not begin all at once."

"Never fear, wife, I know how to take care of myself. I don't want to begin drinking water again; besides, old Rasimus is here to put me in mind of it. Now then, clear out and let me get up."

So every one went away, talking about what had happened, Sebald's generosity, and Trievel's good luck, who found herself raised to the pinnacle of glory, having only to utter a wish to become rich. They were never tired of talking about these things, and the news soon spread all through the court of the Trabans.

CHAPTER VII.



TRIEVEL RASIMUS dwelt in a little cottage, about fifty yards to the left of the Mayence Ham. This cottage was roofed with rotten old planks, a few tiles here and there, and an iron gutter, through which the rain poured like a cullender; it had two very small windows, with dirty little panes set in lead.

When the weather was fine, the old stocking-darner used to hang all her rags out against the ruined walls: her old jackets, patched petticoats, bonnets, stockings, and slippers.

At the door-jamb she used also to hang her black-bird Jacob, in his wicker cage, a splendid bird, with a bright orange-coloured beak, and eyes shining like pearls of agate, and who could sing all the first part of "I have very good tobacco, and what do I want for

more?" These five or six notes, whistled so shrilly, awoke all the echoes in the court, and seemed to harmonise with the tic-tac of Toubac's hammer, the whizzing of Paulus's grindstone, the drawling notes of Karl Beutz as he plaited his baskets, and the numberless noises in the old sewer.

Jacob was incontestably the leader of the orchestra, consisting of the crickets, humble-bees, cobblers, basket-makers, knife-grinders, tinder-sellers, chattering old gossips, and screaming children of the whole neighbourhood. He was the familiar deity of the spot, the first voice of spring, and the last sigh of autumn. When Jacob ceased to sing everything was still; the little windows were blocked up with snow, nothing but mud out of doors, and indoors the inhabitants sat by the fire and shivered. When he began to whistle his favourite air again, you need only open the door to see the sun again, the beautiful sun glancing from the roofs down into the dirty court, and seeming to smile and say, "Here I am again; look at the hills; the violets have begun to blow, and the snow of last year is melting along the sides of the Bocksberg."

It was, therefore, impossible to describe how fond old Rasimus was of her blackbird; she fed him with white cheese, and cleaned his cage out every morning. Nothing could be more simple than the interior of her cottage; her pallet bed in one corner, her clothes-press on the right; above it the Holy Virgin dressed in faded silk, and crowned with yellow macaroni; on the left the blackbird dozing in his cage; one or two rabbits nibbling something in the dark, or running about under the bed; lastly, some rags hanging on nails against the wall. In this cottage Trievel had lived for five-and-

thirty or forty years. She would not have exchanged her hovel for an empire, and I do not think she was much to blame, for what is it which gives things a value but the souvenirs we attach to them? Now Trievel's hovel recalled many a pleasant hour; she had not always a red nose, the excellent woman, and the blackbird had not always been the only singer in the house. Poor Trievel, she had only to creep through her low door, and all the songs of her youth came back to her memory, and without intending it she would hum snatches and fragments of them, sometimes melancholy ones, but more often lively, particularly if she just came in from the tavern.

One can well believe that day Trievel was not in a melancholy humour, but quite the contrary; she laughed and wriggled about as she crossed the court, and some of the wits of the neighbourhood, pretending to be ignorant of what had just occurred, asked her as she went by—

“Ha! Mother Rasimus, how are you this morning? Won't you take a pinch?”

They held their snuff-boxes out of window to her, meaning to get on good terms with her; but Trievel winked her eye, and replied—

“Thanks, Fritz; thanks, Yokel—another time—you are very polite—very polite indeed—but they are waiting breakfast for me, and I must dress myself.” And as she picked her way along the broken pavement to her old hut, “Good heavens!” said she, “how many friends make their appearance when one is no longer in want of them!”

The frightened rabbits then disappeared in their hutch, and the blackbird began to sing. She was too

much preoccupied to pay attention to these things, but began to choose the best of her ancient finery; a tulle cap, with ribbons as wide as your hand, an orange dress with green flounces, blue stockings, a pair of nearly new shoes, and a long black and red shawl.

"Now, Trievel," said she aloud, "you need not hesitate; you may dress yourself as fine as the burgomaster's wife. Thank God, you are as good-looking as Catherine Omacht, and that is no compliment. You must make the best of yourself, Trievel, to do credit to Master Sebald's table; you must pull out your moustaches with the tweezers as Mademoiselle Kœnig, the beadle's daughter, does; young women who are on their preferment cannot have moustaches."

She deposited her apparel on the old commode, and then remembering what she had been thinking about—

"Ha! ha! what makes you so uneasy, Trievel?" she began, laughing; "are you going crazy at your time of life? Thank Heaven those foolish times are over!"

And the poor old thing sighed.

At that moment there came two knocks at the door.

"Wait," she called out—"wait a moment; I am putting my dress on."

"It is I, Trievel; it is Toubac," said the tinker.

"Wait a moment till I am ready."

And then she said to herself—

"Ah! the rascal, he is going to make me a declaration now. We shall see—we shall see."

Then slipping on her skirt—

"You may come in, Toubac—come in."

Toubac walked in, his grey eyes rather clouded, his cheeks red, and his nostrils dilated, looking very grave, like a poodle performing his lesson. He wore his

Sunday hat, a white shirt, the collars of which were cutting his ears, his best brown jacket with bright brass buttons, and his blue cloth pantaloons, which he only wore on fête days when he went to church.

"Good day, Trievel," said he, lowering his voice, generally rather disguised with kirschwasser and tobacco—"good ay, Trievel. Good Lord, how handsome you are! It quite dazzles me to look at you. Why, Trievel, you grow younger every day—you are like a wild rosebush; when there are no flowers on it in the evening there grow plenty next morning."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the old woman, "is it possible, Toubac? You cannot mean what you say."

"Trievel, can you believe at my age I——"

"Toubac, you are a deceiver!"

"I, Trievel? Oh, if I were capable——"

"Yes, you may try, Toubac, with your fine words——"

"But—but—Trievel, when I tell you—there, upon my honour—it is nothing but the truth. Your good looks fetch my eyes out of my head. I have been looking at you for the last five-and-twenty years, and every day you grow younger and better-looking."

"See now, how strange; you think I am growing younger?"

"Yes; I should have proposed to you a hundred times but I was afraid of being refused; it would have been a death-blow to me."

"Toubac! what impossible nonsense!"

"True, indeed, I should have wasted away to nothing. But how can I help it? I am as timid as a child; if I have not had a drop or so I dare not say what I have most at heart, just as it happened at the

great entertainment a fortnight ago, do you recollect, Trievcl?"

"Yes, but you have not mentioned the subject since."

"That is it, I did not dare! But I am more in love with you than ever; look, Trievcl, how I tremble."

The old woman had her back turned towards him as she was putting her cap on before the glass, and she laughed quietly. Toubac heard her laugh, and said—

"You are laughing at me, Trievcl, but it is true for all that: you make me miserable. I dream of you day and night."

"I am laughing, Toubac, because since this morning every one adores me; some offer me a pinch of snuff, others tell me I resemble a rosebush, and I am growing younger daily; all that, of course, gives me pleasure. I readily believe you love me, Toubac; I am not too old a Rasimus that some one should not love me; there are some who have still more wrinkles on their nose than I have, and who are adored all the same. Besides, you have already told me so two or three times, which shows your good sense. But, honestly now, Toubac, there must be some other reason which makes you come and propose to me to-day rather than last week, and when you are quite sober too, as you have already remarked, there must be some other reason."

Then she turned round and began to laugh.

"Come, tell me now, am I not right?"

Toubac made an attempt to deny it.

"Have you not heard that Master Sebald wants me to form a wish of some sort—to ask something of him?"

The tinker did not know which way to turn.

"I have heard them talking about it," said he, scratching his ear; "but I shall never believe that Master Sebald——"

"That is just where you make a mistake," interrupted the old woman, forcing a smile, and nodding her head with a self-satisfied air.

Then she took a turn about the room, twisting herself about, drawing her shawl closer on her back, and looking at herself over her shoulder, to see if her dress swept the ground properly.

"That is where you are quite mistaken, Monsieur Toubac—that is exactly what he did say to me; I need only express a wish—a house, a vine, a large sum of money—and he would give it me."

"Is it possible?" said the tinker ingenuously. "And what are you going to wish for, Trieval? What do you intend to ask for?"

Then the old woman ceased her airs, and recovered her usual stupid manner, then she took a pinch of snuff without any farther affectation, and answered thoughtfully—

"As to that, we shall see. You understand it requires consideration. I shall make up my mind the day of the grand banquet, and according as I shall feel inclined to marry a burgomaster, a councillor, or a tinker, shall I express my wish. But I must first choose a husband—thank God there is no want of them now—and then I shall choose my fortune. But for a moment I shall neither say yes nor no, Toubac. Since you think me a pretty woman, I must say I think you a handsome man; but if others should offer themselves, then I shall look about; I can afford to be difficult in my choice now, and shall please my fancy."

"Trievel," cried the tinker, making believe to tear his hair, "if you choose another I will hang myself at your door."

"Nonsense, Toubac," said the woman, "go and get your breakfast; or, stay, come with me, that is better than despairing; give me your arm, and let us be off."

Toubac gallantly offered his arm, and they walked away together very seriously. Every one in the court was looking out of window, and said—

"Toubac has made a conquest of Trievel; what an old fool she must be to think he is running after her for her beauty! See how she holds her head up, look at the airs she is giving herself—ha! ha!"

The old woman, overhearing these remarks, half closed her eyes and pursed up her lips to make them the more angry; and in this style they reached the door of the Mayence Ham. Master Sebald, who was sitting at table, no sooner saw them than he clapped his hands above his head, and cried out—

"Trievel! Trievel! I am glad to see you, you always do me good! Come here, this is your place, and, Toubac, there is yours."

And as Trievel, without a smile on her face, saluted them all with a curtsey worthy of a lady-in-waiting, the jolly old tavern-keeper burst into a laugh so joyous that the echoes of the old tavern, which had so long been mute, awoke in their turn, and carried the sound down to the kitchen.

CHAPTER VIII.



THAT day was a great treat for all the bon-vivants of the Trabans' Court, and all Bergzabern besides. You could hear the drum of Purrhus, the watchman, a long way off, and his shrill voice cry out—

“This is to give notice that by the grace of God and the intercession of the Holy Virgin, Master Frantz Christian Sebaldu Dick has been happily restored to health, that he is very well, and invites all his friends and acquaintances to meet next Sunday week, after high mass, to celebrate the praises of the Lord, with their glasses in their hands. There will be a banquet in the yard of the old synagogue, the music of three bands, ninepins, the game of the ring, the barrel, &c.”

The sun himself seemed to share in the general gaiety, for he shone with more than usual splendour. One could see from the upper windows of the tavern the purple of autumn spreading along the hill-side, the vines as far as the eye could reach loaded with grapes, and the oak forest of Schlosswald above them, whose green foliage had begun to turn brown.

In the court everything rustled and buzzed in the damp warmth concentrated between the gloomy old buildings. Anna Schmidt's yellow cock flapped his wings and screamed hoarsely among his hens; the blackbird of old Rasimus sang like a cuckoo the same four notes. Millions of small golden flies flitted about in the red light which descended from the tiles. And at the darker end of the court sat Master Sebaldu, old Rasimus, Christian, Fridoline, Toubac, Grédel, and

twenty more, eating, drinking, and congratulating one another, and shaking hands with others who by threes, fours, and sixes at a time, hurried in under the archway of the Trabans, waving their caps and calling out—

“Good health to you, Master Sebald! we are glad to see you again looking so well! How you have frightened us! That rascal Eselskopf had reduced you indeed. Well, you are here again at last, thank Heaven! Do you know, Master Sebald, one ought to be as strong as you are to have got over it.”

“I believe so, truly!” cried the good fellow; “fifty others would have died under such treatment. I had to live for a fortnight on my own fat; fortunately there was enough to keep me alive. But if I meet Eselskopf let him look out, that’s all.”

He shook his fist significantly, and they all agreed with him. But the poor man, whose old brown coat fitted him now like a dressing-gown, when he noticed how the sleeves hung about his shrunken arms, and the collar fell in folds about his neck and shoulders like the hood of Father Johannes, seemed rather out of spirits.

“You might put four such men as I am now into it,” said he; “but patience, Grédel, wait a bit! I will undertake to fill it out again entirely; in a fortnight or three weeks’ time there shall not be a single wrinkle in it. Fill my glass, Christian, don’t you see it is empty? Trivel, pass me the black puddings. Good gracious! how glad I am to find myself sitting here again at table without seeing Eselskopf’s long yellow physiognomy, who called out at every mouthful, ‘Stop, stop, too much, take care, you are eating too much spinach!’ Ought not such a rascal as that to be hanged? I have

always said there is no justice on this earth, for if there was Eselskopf would have been shaking in the wind long ago from the gallows in the Galzenberg."

The whole day passed in this pleasant way. About six in the evening old Rosselkasten, at the head of the band from the Three Herrings, came and played a serenade at the door of the Mayence Ham. There were three clarionets, two trombones, a fife, and Rosselkasten himself, who was double-bass. They played a grand symphony about the rising of the sun; Master Sebald, in a state of delighted meditation, listening to it till tears began to roll down his cheeks, and he called out—

"Good Lord! when I think how near I was dying!"

At these affecting words all present shivered; Grédel grew pale, and Fridoline went and threw herself into her father's arms, who sobbed like a child.

Then Rosselkasten and the whole band were brought to drink to the tavern-keeper's happy recovery.

They retired, however, earlier than usual, for Master Sebald, feeling tired, went to bed early. Grédel, Mother Rasimus, Fridoline, and Christian, after sitting up so often and so much uneasiness, were also in want of rest.

What most delighted these good people was to hear that at nightfall, after he had been round the town, Purrhus came to tell them that Eselskopf had gone on board Baptiste Kromer's boat, under pretence of going to visit his aunt at Creuznach. They all comprehended he had made his escape to conceal his shame at having been defeated.

Master Sebald had one glass more in honour of this additional triumph; after which, with unsteady legs, supported on one side by Christian, and on the other

by Toubac, he retired to his room. At the same time his friends left the parlour, and for a long time afterwards people used to talk about these extraordinary occurrences, and of Master Sebald Dick's singular good luck at various critical moments of his life, how he was always under the protection of some invisible power.

There was great talk, too, about the good fortune of Triewel Rasimus, of the tender glances exchanged between Fridoline and Christian, and many other topics of the same sort.

It was such a fine night, so calm and sweet, and the sky so studded with stars, that one could hardly make up one's mind to go home.

At last there was an end to all this conversation, and even to whispering. By eleven all Bergzabern was asleep, waiting for the promised banquet, and for what the future was to bring forth, upon which at present no two persons seemed to agree.

CHAPTER IX.



HE Book of Ecclesiastes says in its wisdom all is vanity ; love, wealth, health, gratified ambition, the humiliation of our enemies, and our own glory do not constitute happiness. We are never satisfied either with ourselves or others, and things go on thus from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, until at last, lean, yellow, bald, broken in health, crippled, with dimmed eyes, deaf ears, toothless jaws, and fallen chins, we finish by exclaiming in a tremulous voice, "Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas !"

Alas! the king, prophet, philosopher, old rabbi, whoever he may be, who formerly (about three thousand years ago) wrote these things, was a man well acquainted with men and human life; he had seen, touched, felt, observed, and reasoned upon them; he was right, very right, but these truths offer us no consolation, and under correction he would have done better had he remained silent than thus have struck our souls with dismay.

Anyhow, the old rabbi was right. What did Master Sebald want now to be perfectly happy? Had he not recovered his health, his appetite, and his good looks? Was he not delivered from the clutches of Eselskopf? Did he not see Grédel, Fridoline, Christian, and Trievel Rasimus around him, the people he liked better than any others? Was not the vintage approaching, and the day of the grand banquet, fixed by himself, to celebrate his happy convalescence?—was it not the very next Sunday but one?

No doubt he ought to have been contented; nevertheless, Trievel Rasimus the next day noticed he was not the same man; he did not drink his wine with his former gusto, nor did he laugh as joyously as before, and every moment he turned his eyes to the door as if in expectation of something.

The old stocking-darner noticed this peculiar restlessness in him the next morning from her window. At day-break he left his room, opened the tavern, and with his hands crossed behind his back, kept his eyes fixed on the Trabans' Gate. Ennui was painted on his good-natured face; he went in and out again, then in a melancholy mood sat down to his breakfast with a vacant and absent look. His fork fell several times from his hands,

and his glass stopped half-way between the table and his lips. Sometimes he set it down untasted. Even the appearance of Fridoline failed to make him smile.

"Sit down, my child, and let us talk."

But Fridoline could think of nothing to say to him.

Sometimes he would exclaim, "Ah! the good old times are gone never to return."

Then old Mother Rasimus, who had gone away to attire herself, would run in and say—

"Good day, Monsieur Dick. Well, how is the appetite this morning?"

"So so; sit down, Trievel; eat and drink; these chitterlings are excellent, but I am not hungry. I have something wrong inside."

Then he would put his finger against his heart.

"There, just there," he would say pathetically; "there is something out of order there; I feel it—a sort of oppression."

Then he began exclaiming against Father Johannes—

"The vagabond! he will be my death. He struck the blow which made me waste away—the bandit!—and I loved him so. I would have given him anything—the half of all I am worth. I looked on him as my own brother."

Then his voice became thicker; he grew pale.

"I see surely enough," said he, "that it is all over with me."

Then he would get up and walk about with his hand on his heart, and his eyes full of tears, exclaiming—

"It is always those one loves the most who strike one the hardest blows. One never ought to care for any one. I could not help it—that beggar, when I saw him my heart rejoiced. I ought to have shut the

door in his face. But who could help it? So it was to be."

On those occasions old Rasimus said nothing. She let his anger run its course, which sometimes lasted half-an-hour; then he sat down and drank his liquor in silence.

Sometimes Toubac, or some one else, arriving in the middle of this fit of anger, would chime in with the good man's abuse of the capuchin; then he used to break in with—

"Why do you interfere? I am the person to complain. Do I want your assistance to say he is a beggar, a rascal, and a bandit? Cannot I say as much myself? Was it I, yes or no, whom he attacked in that cowardly manner from behind? Don't mention him before me; he is not worth talking about. What is the use of coming and teasing me about that man? I know nothing more of him; it is the same to me as if he had never existed."

Nearly every day wood-cutters and charcoal-burners came in as they were passing the Mayence Ham to have a pint or so of wine. Master Sebald, who was acquainted with every one for miles around, would go and lean with both his hands on the table without sitting down, talking about crops, price of wood, &c.

"The rascal! the capuchin!" was always the end of what he had to say.

"Ah, Master Sebald!" they would reply, "it is not every day a feast with him now as it used to be; now his chitterlings are potatoes roasted on the ashes, and his Pleiszeller is only spring water."

"Is he very lean?"

"Is he lean? He is only skin and bone!"

“Why does he not go making collections with his ass Polak?”

“Ah, Monsieur Dick! people are not as charitable as they used to be. The capuchins have no longer the village chimneys to fall back upon. Father Johannes may sing his ‘oremus’ from morning till night. The raven of the prophet Elijah brings him no puddings; he is wasting away.”

“Well, then,” said the tavern-keeper, “I am satisfied, since that is the case; the rascal had not courage enough to come and see me, and say, ‘Master Sebald, it was through your white wine that I sinned against you.’ It would not have cost him much to invent that excuse, and I should have affected to believe him; but, rather than act thus, his pride lets him suffer; he expects me to go and say, ‘Father Johannes, come and eat my chitterlings and black puddings, and drink my Pleiszeller!’ Yes, it is likely I should go to him and say so—let him wait till I do!”

Then he added—

“I am fortunate to have got rid of such a rascal—how fortunate! I can freely confess now that the day I suffered the blows from his cudgel was the happiest day of my life; at all events, I have got rid of a nuisance.”

So the worthy tavern-keeper was pleased with all he heard and all he saw, nevertheless his gloominess increased daily as the day of the banquet drew nigh.

About the middle of the week it was necessary to begin the preparations for the feast, the arrangements of the tables, the construction of an orchestra for the musicians, and the decorations for the court.

Master Sebald was to be seen walking about, rule in

hand, with the carpenters, Furst and Ulrich, taking dimensions, and discussing the proposed arrangements himself, which he had never done before ; consequently one judged the solemnity would be grander and more imposing than all those of the same sort which preceded it.

He went into his cellars, and visited them personally from one end to the other, accompanied by his cellarman, Schweyer, and his men, pointing out what barrels were to be tapped for the first course, and for the second and third also, and choosing what bottled wine ought to be set on table at dessert. He also paid attention to the orders given for eatables ; he wrote letters to all his correspondents at Spire, Mayence, Frankfort, and even at Cologne.

In opposition to Grédel's advice, he insisted upon having sea-fish sent for, and as his wife acknowledged she was quite ignorant of the manner it should be cooked, never having been away from her native place in her life, that nothing might be wanting in that respect, he wrote to the celebrated cook Hafenkouker, at the Ræmar Hotel, at Frankfort, to come and superintend this part of the dinner in person.

All these matters took up much of his attention, and Fridoline, Mother Rasimus, as well as Christian, were consulted. Christian was especially charged with the decorations, which were to be of different foliage ; the oak, beech, plane-tree, and larch contributed their leaves for that purpose.

The great world of Bergzabern relieved one another under the archway of the Trabans in contemplating these grandiose preparations ; garlands which reached to the roofs in gigantic curves, walls covered with moss ;

the wretched stalls were bedecked with flowers and leaves so well, that even their little windows were concealed by them.

From the Thursday of the second week the tables were already prepared—they were in the shape of a horseshoe—the table between the two arms was for Sebald's intimate friends, his family, and those he delighted to honour.

That day, as they were arranging each guest's place, so that friend might sit by friend, the carpenter Furst, pointing to the top of the middle table, said—

“Master Sebald, that is the place of honour—you ought to put our burgomaster Omacht there.”

“The burgomaster!” exclaimed Sebald in a rage—“much I care about the burgomaster! A man who sends to Amsterdam for game-cocks to beat ours. Let him go to the devil, and find a place where he can.”

“But,” objected Furst, “who will you give the place to? You cannot sit in both places at once, Monsieur Dick, that is impossible.”

“That seat shall remain empty,” said the tavern-keeper in a gloomy tone—“yes; it shall remain empty; no one shall sit there.”

Then becoming more animated—

“He for whom it was intended,” said he, “is a rascal, a creature puffed up with pride and vanity, and who, I warn you, will never have the heart to show himself here; a creature who has made himself contemptible in the eyes of every one; his place shall remain empty, and every one shall say, ‘See, that is where the capuchin should have sat, but he confesses himself unworthy of coming and sitting opposite the man who gave him to eat and to drink, and who loved him as a

brother for more than twenty years'—that is my intention, so let no one think I deprive him of his place—I mean nothing of the sort. For should he by any chance return here, you understand me, and see his place taken by another, it might break his heart, and the shame thereof would fall upon me.”

Thus spoke the worthy tavern-keeper; and though no one understood his reasons in the least, Furst replied—

“Yes—oh, yes; that makes a difference, of course. I was not aware of these matters previously.”

The last day packages arrived from all parts of Germany. The great room was so encumbered with baskets of game, hampers, packages, cases, and bales, that it required five men's labour to put everything in order. The kitchen was taken up with preparing “kuchlen” and “kougelhof,” and other pastry which Grédel had already begun to get ready.

Shouts of enthusiasm heralded the arrival of every fresh vehicle. But what astonished the crowd the most was the sight of the sea-fish. Till then Master Sebald had been very uneasy respecting it. The celebrated Hafenkouker came the previous evening with his three principal scullions in white jackets and cotton caps. He had also caused a stove to be erected in one of the corners of the court, as the kitchen was not sufficiently spacious to allow so many succulent dishes to be cooked, nor was the door sufficiently wide to admit of their passage.

The sea-fish arrived on Saturday afternoon, in such profusion that the carriage which brought it could only just pass through the Trabans' gateway; and they began to unpack these unknown fish on the long deal

tables in the middle of the court, some as large and flat as a plate, glutinous, black on one side and white or pink on the other, with large ribbed fins like the wings of a bat—soles, rays, whittings, turbot, all those strange-looking creatures whose heads are hardly to be distinguished from their tails, and with their mouths in the middle of their bellies—creatures entirely unknown in the mountains; Sebald himself did not know their names. You can easily picture to yourself the amazement of the crowd. They stood round the tables looking at them and conjecturing whether they swam upright or on their sides or their bellies. They could hardly believe the Lord had created such hideous objects, and every one made a private resolution not to taste them. Master Sebald himself held his nose, and said—

“They may be very good eating for savages when they have been on short rations for three or four days, and there is nothing left for them but to devour one another or to eat these great bull-heads. I thought they were something quite different, or I should not have sent for them.”

However, they were very well satisfied to find among these monsters four-and-twenty such magnificent lobsters that the finest from Hundsrück were small by comparison.

But Hafenkouker was not of the same opinion as the spectators. He considered the sea-fish very fine, and had them taken to his extemporised kitchen, declaring that Master Sebald would get over his prejudice against them when he saw them properly dressed.

Thus supplies were arriving from all parts. The

tables were arranged, the court decked out with garlands and flags, the ovens alight; but for all that Master Sebald seemed, amidst all his glorification, dull and out of spirits. Instead of laughing and bragging as formerly, he looked at everything with indifference. At supper that evening Mother Rasimus noticed the worthy man's eyes were full of tears.

"My dear children," said he all at once, addressing Fridoline and Christian, who were smiling at one another after having hung up the last remaining garland, "you cannot think how pleased I am with you. You have fulfilled—nay, anticipated—my every wish, and I cannot look at you without pride and satisfaction. Yes; Frantz Sebald Christian Dick is the happiest of men, and to-morrow will be a pleasant day for every one—for you, in the first place, my children; for Trievel Rasimus, who has to express her wish; for all our friends and relations; for us all, except——"

He did not finish what he had to say, but added, after a moment's pause—

"It is my wish that the poor—those who have only potatoes to eat and water to drink—should also share in our gratifications."

And then, with emotion perceptible in his voice, he desired the remains of the banquet should be distributed among them, together with the sum of a hundred gulden.

"Christian and Fridoline shall see to this," said he, "and the Lord will send His blessing upon them."

He said no more, but retired much affected to his chamber.

Triewel comprehended the good man wished to see his old companion Johannes again, and the want of it

spoiled all his pleasure, while he was oppressed with the idea that the father was in distress while he was surrounded by joy and plenty.

But how could it be helped? The capuchin's pride was not less than that of the master of the tavern. Johannes clung fast to the God of Jacob. Sebald would have despised himself had he renounced the divinity of the sun. Try, then, to induce either to make the first advances! It was impossible. Triewel returned to her cottage, turning all this over in her mind.

CHAPTER X.



NOW about three on that Sunday morning Triewel Rasimus's windows were all on a sudden lighted up; the old woman got up, slipped on her clothes, and then half opening the door she began to gaze up in the sky all sparkling with stars.

"It is a magnificent sight," thought she—"it will be nice cool walking."

Then she finished dressing herself.

Jacob, the blackbird, was quite astonished to be aroused so long before daybreak, he who had been so long accustomed to awaken other people, so he never stirred from the bottom of his cage; with his glittering eyes he watched the light as it moved about the room. The rabbits, too, kept very still, except the old one, the grandfather of them all, a fine white rabbit with brown spots, which Mother Rasimus called Abraham, on account of his long whiskers, his very numerous progeny,

and his venerable aspect. Abraham sat on the doorstep alternately raising and depressing one ear at a time, and scratching his nose with his paw as much as to say, "What can she be up as early as this for? Is she going out? Perhaps she has some design on the life of my dear Isaac, the hope and consolation of my old age?"

At last Trievel, having put on her thick shoes, took her stick and left the cottage, taking no further precaution than to shut the crazy door and draw the bolt; then she passed under the Trabans' archway and gained the street. The Trabans' street, as one leaves the court, leads on the left to the lower town, as far as the little entrance to the markets and the old shambles. As you go up the street to the right towards the Schlosswald, you come to the hermitage of the Holy Chapel of the Lupersberg. It was in this last direction, nearer to the open country, that Trievel Rasimus turned her steps. She trotted along, holding her head down, with her stick in her hand, and the fringes of her cap flapping against her brickdust-coloured cheeks. She might have been mistaken, by the pale light of the moon, as she hurried along under the shadow of the walls, for an old gipsy marauding, the more so as she never slackened her pace.

At the end of a quarter of an hour she had reached the path which crosses the vines up to the top of the hill. The moon in the open country shone like a mirror, lighting up the low walls of dry stone, the knotty vine-storks and their large red leaves, the brushwood, and even the small pebbles in the path; one could see them plainer than by day. The weather was mild, in the distance a partridge was calling, and

one could hear him flapping his wings and another call to him in reply.

Triewel Rasimus stopped for a moment or two at the foot of the moss-covered cross, at which the pilgrims from the Marienthal kneel; she drew her flask from her pocket and took a good draught, then jerking up her dress in her left hand she began to climb like a goat, only halting now and then on the little terraces to recover her breath.

She was soon looking down on the Trabans' court. From that height the ancient town with its pointed pinnacles, its immense roofs with four or five rows of windows in them, its spires, its spouts to carry off the rain, its labyrinths of narrow streets, its penthouses, its turrets with their sharp outlines cut in black on the snowy white pavement; the church of Saint Sylvester, enriched with sculpture, with its three gloomy porches and its thousand statuettes of male and female saints, silvered by the moon against the dark background of their niches; the tumble-down synagogue, the tavern, and the numerous sheds in the deep court which the pale moonlight could not reach—all this offered a strange, mysterious, and grandiose spectacle. All slept in Bergzabern, only in one corner of the Trabans' court a red light showed that Hafenkouker's stoves were already at work; Hafenkouker himself and his scullions, in cotton nightcaps, flitted from time to time across the light like so many imps, and their long shadows were cast all round the moss-bedecked walls.

"He! he! he!" cried the old woman as she laughed, "the savoury smell comes up as far as this. Good gracious! what a feast we shall have!"

With this comforting reflection Triewel began climb-

ing up the hill again. Brushwood succeeded to vines, then heather; at last, as it struck four, and hundreds of cocks were calling from one farm to another, and the barking of the various town dogs, mingled in confusion with other sounds, reached the place where she was standing, Trievel Rasimus arrived at the barren summit, and saw facing her, on the other slope of the Lupersberg, the tall tower of the little chapel of Saint John and the thatched roof of the hermitage peeping through the morning fog. Not a sound was here to be heard, not a murmur. As the moon was towards Pirmasens, the shadow of the summit of the mountain covered the whole of the slope on that side. A light from within occasionally illuminated the two windows of the hovel, then all was dark again.

"Here we are at last," said Trievel to herself, taking a good pinch of snuff; then she started again. Ten minutes later she was close to the building; and with outstretched neck she leand towards one of the windows to ascertain what was doing inside.

At first she could distinguish nothing, it was so dark; then she made out some upright supports, from which bundles of straw, hay, and various grasses were hanging; then a large box full of dry leaves, and a sack for a pillow; on the left an opening in the wall, a black hole, at the bottom of which something moved. Trievel at first thought it was the capuchin, who had betaken himself to that hole as a sort of expiation; but on looking again she recognised Polak, the ass, whose long ears and melancholy face were visible from time to time when he lifted his head from the manger, and directly afterwards she saw Father Johannes sitting on the ground, his legs apart in front of the hearth; he

was roasting potatoes in the ashes, and when the fire brightened up all these bundles of hay and straw hanging from the roof, the bars of the manger, the grotesque head of the donkey, his pack-saddle and halter hanging from the wall, the old oaken crucifix and the little earthenware fount of holy water above the bed of leaves, a jug of water in one corner, and the formidable blackthorn cudgel in another—all these things in confusion together seemed to dance with their shadows on the clay walls as the fire flared up; it was truly a strange spectacle.

Father Johannes himself, his elbow on his knee, his cheek on his hand, looked just like the goat Hazazel, condemned to bear the sins of the human race; he had become as yellow, dry, and lean as a piece of old box-wood; his eyebrows, joined like a V above his nose, seemed to have grown closer than ever, and his eyes squinted as he looked at the potatoes. Trievel, knowing how touchy and irritable the capuchin was, after making these observations, crept quietly away through the heather, then making a noise, she walked up to the door as if she had only just arrived.

“*Hola! Father Johannes, are you at home? Open the door; it is I, Trievel Rasimus,*” cried she, in a tone of good-humour.

“*What! Trievel Rasimus! and where do you come from so early, Trievel?*”

“*From Hirschland, Father Johannes, and I would not pass so close to your hermitage without wishing you good morning.*”

“*Quite right, Trievel, you did well; come in, come in.*”

They crept in under the bundles of hay and straw; both seemed pleased.

"Sit down, Trievel," said the capuchin, giving the old woman the only stool there was in the hut; "warm yourself; it is rather chilly this morning. So you have been to Hirschland?"

"Yes, I have been to invite my cousin Frantz Piper, the clarionet-player, to the great banquet to-day, and I left Hirschland early to get home before it became very hot."

Father Johannes pricked his ears when he heard her talk about a banquet, but he made no observation.

"Indeed," said he—"indeed!"

Trievel had seated herself close to the hearth, and pushed her hair back under her cap; then taking a look round—

"You are not very uncomfortable here, Father Johannes," said she; "especially in winter time, you must be warm enough with your donkey. That bed of leaves—how I like a bed of leaves! they don't get dirty like sheets; they only want turning over a little—well, I think you are very comfortable here."

"Why, yes, one might be worse off," replied the capuchin abstractedly.

Then he returned to the charge.

"So you are returning from Hirschland to be present at a fête. May I ask, Trievel, what saint's day it may be?"

"What, have you not heard?" said the old woman, with an innocent air; "don't you know that Master Sebald gives an entertainment, a grand banquet, something quite out of the common, to-day, something so unusually grand that people talk of nothing else as far as Landau, Neustadt—all round the country, in fact?"

For a moment Father Johannes seemed stupefied.

"You surprise me," said he; "so he is going to give a grand entertainment?"

And there he sat looking straight before him with dilated nostrils, as if he saw this sight, then rousing himself—

"Master Sebald is quite recovered, then?" asked he; "quite recovered, is he? Ah, well, well, so much the better, I am glad to hear it! But for all that, I regret—yes, I regret that a man of his years, a man of experience, hardly snatched from the jaws of death, should think of plunging once more into a sea of sensual delight, of gorging himself with rich viands, and of quenching his thirst with delicious wines; it is—yes, it is most deplorable."

While he was talking about succulent dishes and delicious wines, Johannes seemed to have his mouth full; his nose moved about, and a slight tinge of purple spread over his brown cheeks. Trievel was watching him narrowly.

"You are quite right," returned she; "it makes one shudder to think of it; but it cannot be helped; as soon as the danger is over one thinks of something else. Only fancy, Father Johannes, he has had sent from Mayence three eel-pies—you know what I mean—so tender, with little 'knapfe' and small white mushrooms in them—those pies which——"

"Don't talk to me about eel-pies," interrupted the capuchin, getting up; "don't talk to me about such things. It is revolting, it is abominable, to think that Sebald, instead of working out his salvation after passing through such a terrible ordeal, should only be thinking of cramming his belly with delicate food."

But as he noticed the old woman was watching him from the corner of her eye—

“O Lord!” he continued in a paternal tone, clasping his hands together, “I thank Thee for having cast Thy Divine light upon me; I thank Thee for stopping me when on the brink of that bottomless abyss of sensuality, and for teaching me that all human things are but vanity of vanities. It is not for me, unworthy as I am, to blame my neighbour’s conduct, but I may be permitted to shed tears of regret over his backsliding.”

Then the old sinner passed his hand over his face and turned up his nose, and old Mother Rasimus said in a tone of stupid pity—

“Very fine, Father Johannes—what you have just said is very fine; I always thought you would end by becoming a saint; even when you used to empty the great tankard of Gleiszeller of the year XI., you used to raise your eyes to the ceiling with such an air of adoration that it made me think ‘What a grand saint he would make—what a grand saint, in a picture in the cathedral!’”

Father Johannes looked askance at the old woman, thinking she was laughing at him. She had such an air of conviction, of being quite in earnest, and looked so stupid with her clasped hands on her knees, and the fringe of her cap hanging over her red nose, that he had no doubt she spoke quite seriously.

“Yes,” she continued, “you are quite right, Father Johannes; all these hams, chitterlings, ‘professor’s wurst,’ eel-pies, stuffed turkeys, bottles of Forstheimer and Bodenheimer—all that is but vanity—nothing is certain, very certain, but eternal life, where angels, saints,

and seraphim fly about in the air blowing trumpets as one sees in the chapel of Saint Sylvester; there, that is certain, it is clear. And I have the idea of being converted a hundred times, but the flesh is so weak, Father Johannes; why, the smell alone of the kitchen upsets all my good resolutions."

The capuchin said nothing, then he coughed.

"Hum, hum," he observed; "yes—yes—the flesh!"

Then he paused, so Trievel continued, after treating herself to a pinch of snuff—

"The flesh is the destruction both of men and women; so, for instance, you would not believe how all the burghers in Bergzabern come and greet Master Sebald, only to be invited to his entertainment—it is a procession from morning till night. And, to tell the truth, all you have seen is but a trifle in comparison with this feast. There are all sorts of game from the mountains, thrushes from the Hundsrück, woodcocks, hazel hens, and blackcock from the Vosges, three wild boars to be stuffed with chestnuts, three roe-deer to be stuffed with olives; he has sent for fish from the Rhine; carp, salmon, and trout in abundance, and such extraordinary sea-fish that Koenig, the sexton, Councillor Baltzer, and all who know anything about them, say they will delight you, body and soul. Fruit has been fetched from Hoheim, Vaudenheim, Baden, and elsewhere, in little baskets lined with moss; the ripest of pears, golden pippins, &c.; it makes one's mouth water. And for the first time in his life Master Sebald has agreed to send French wine—that is to say, Burgundy, Bordeaux, and red and white Champagne—round at the second course, a thing he never would do hitherto, on account of his great affection for the

German fatherland; but this time it is his wish that all the delicacies of earth, sea, and air should meet on his table, and that it should be remembered by men for ever and ever."

"For ever and ever!" said the capuchin, shrugging his shoulders; "just see there his pride and his foolish vanity. Let me ask you, for ever and ever? and even if it could be so, what glory would there be in passing for a gormandiser down to the hundredth generation? Oh, shame—oh, matter-of-fact creature! Well, well," said he, stammering, striding up and down the hovel, "what is to be done? what to be said? It is a shame and disgrace to Bergzabern as well as the whole cource of the Rhine! There was a time when people thought of Divine matters; now their only care is to convey things pleasant to the taste down their throats; in this wise civilisation perishes, for this cause was the world flooded by a deluge, and Sodom and Gomorrah swallowed up in a sea of flames! And I could pity this man! I repented, I almost regretted having chastised him, my heart ached when I thought——"

"Then," said Trievel, interrupting him abruptly, "you don't intend coming to this feast?"

"I go to that banquet!—I? it would be the acme of disgrace, it would be denying my God, my faith, my convictions. God forbid!"

He walked, and talked, and gesticulated; Trievel's eyes followed him, turning her head about like a weathercock, sometimes right, sometimes left.

"Nevertheless, Father Johannes," said she, "your place is there; Master Sebald has kept your place for you."

At these words the capuchin stopped short, and looking at the old woman with a piercing eye—

"How? Master Sebald has kept my place?" cried he. "Then he no longer bears me any ill-will? he confesses he was in the wrong? seeks to be reconciled to me? There always was some good in him, I must allow it; his accursed pride is his destruction, but except that he has an excellent heart. And so he has kept my place for me? You see, Trievel, I could not return to the tavern after the affront I received—no, no! But I confess, when I reflected how I had lost the affection of all my old comrades—Toubac, Hans Aden, Paul Borbès, yours, and Dame Grédel's—an excellent, a worthy woman, the best cook in the Rheingau, who is no braggart, and is not eternally singing her own praises, right or wrong—when I thought I had lost her affection as well as Christian's, and above all that of little Fridoline, that dear little child I have carried in my arms and nursed in my bosom, poor little thing!—yes, I confess it was painful not to see all these people any more; it was hard, very hard, and gave me a thousand times more pain than all the rest. Well, it is a great relief to me to know there is no longer any ill-will between us; but return to the Mayence Ham and bow my head before Master Sebald? Never—never!"

Trievel Rasimus listened more attentively to this fine discourse.

"Never!" the capuchin went on; "rather die in distress! If Master Sebald would only make the first advances, if he would confess he was to blame, if he sent some one with a formal invitation——"

He stopped, looking at the old woman, and thinking she was going to say, "That is what brought me here, Father Johannes." But he was greatly deceived when Trievel began—

"Confess he was in the wrong! Nonsense! Why you don't know him yet."

"But since he has kept a place for me?"

"Of course he has, to defy you."

"How?—to defy me?"

"Yes, to defy you. Have you heard nothing about the challenge he published?"

"What challenge? Come, Trievel, explain yourself."

"Why, the challenge Purrhus the watchman published all over the town, announcing, by Master Sebald's order, that your place would be kept, and that you would not dare to come and take it to testify for the God of Jacob, that he challenged you before every one to do so, and if you did not come, as was probable you would not, then people would see you were defeated, trodden under foot, and were ready to ask for mercy. For that reason, he, Sebald, undertook to proclaim by sound of trumpet the victory of the sun's divinity and your signal discomfiture. What, have you never heard anything about these things? Why, people talk of nothing else all about the country; some say you would come, others that you dared not."

The capuchin had turned pale, and his cheeks quivered with anger.

"What, what!" he began to stammer, "this great ass, this materialist, this ignorant cub, this vanity-swollen wine-skin dares to defy me—me—to appear! Oh, this is too much! All I said but now, Trievel, about his good heart and good sense, I retract it all! He is clearly choking with vanity—his head is turned. Yes, I see more clearly than ever, and notwithstanding my feeling of indulgence for him, that he is a stupid, shallow creature, twenty ages behind the rest of the

world. His god the sun! the sun! ha! ha! ha! what a discovery! the religion of the earliest savages! Why, it is truly incredible—it is——”

“Then you will come?” asked Trievel, holding her head down to hide a smile.

“Will I go to defend my God, the God of our fathers? Certainly—certainly! But let no one think I go to eat or to drink—no, this is my sustenance.”

And he showed his potatoes.

“I was getting them ready to go my rounds to-day, but under circumstances so important as these I give it up. I set forth, I march to meet heretics, I go as the sacred King David went to meet the giant Goliath, armed with my crook, my sling, and my three pebbles. So he defies me?”

There was a moment's silence, then Trievel Rasimus muttered—

“Well, I was surprised, Father Johannes, that you remained so quiet: I could not believe at the hour of battle you would remain with your arms crossed in this way, as if you felt you had been worsted beforehand.”

“Worsted beforehand!” began the capuchin. “Listen, Trievel; this day shall you see the triumph of Jehovah, the great God, the jealous God! You may go and tell the Bergzabern people from me——”

“Rest assured,” interrupted the old woman, taking her stick in her hand, “I will spread the news everywhere. The banquet begins at eleven; you had better be there early; all your friends will be there.”

“Yes, Trievel, I reckon on you, and I thank you for coming to give me notice. God of Heaven! when I think had it not been for you the God of armies might have been vanquished this day!”

They left the hut together, and the capuchin, quite revived, having accompanied Trievel Rasimus about fifty yards across the heather, pressed her hand, and repeated—

“Tell every one I am coming; if all the legions of darkness were there with Master Sebald at their head, I shall come.”

Trievel Rasimus then departed, laughing in her sleeve. It was then nearly six in the morning; the sun was gilding the side of the mountain. Just as the old woman reached the path leading to Bergzabern, Johannes was ringing for matins with all his might, and the tinkling of the little bells of Saint John was repeated by echo upon echo down to the foot of the mountain.

CHAPTER XI.



THAT night Sebald slept comfortably from nine in the evening until eight the next morning; the sun was shining through the windows when he awoke. Dame Grédel, Hafenkouker and his sculions, Schweyer and his boys, Christian and Fridoline, and all the male and female servants of the Mayence Ham, had long been up and stirring, coming and going, and giving and receiving the last instructions for the banquet. The autumnal breeze stirred the garlands in the court, the tavern was full of that scent of leaves which one finds at the altars set up in the streets for the Corpus Christi procession, and there was a crowd of curious people under the Trabans' archway, continually

reinforced, gazing at these wonders. Master Sebald turned his head, and saw his great cocked hat, with red and blue rosettes, and his gala clothes on the chest of drawers. Grédel had got everything ready beforehand; she was most careful, and never forgot anything. So the good man got up, and put on his black woollen stockings, shoes with silver buckles, and velvet breeches, which he was already beginning happily to fill out again.

After he had assumed his splendid scarlet waistcoat he opened his window, and when he saw the sombre court, with its lofty oaken gables under the vast arch of the sky, looking like Saint Sylvester's Cathedral, and even more imposingly grand, he was seized with admiration at it; but, instead of shouting with laughter as he once did, and crying, "It is I—I, Frantz Sebald Christian Dick, by the grace of God, who am the author of these things," he became very grave, and remained silent.

For more than an hour the worthy tavern-keeper in his shirt-sleeves, his great grey head in disorder, remained plunged in a pleasant reverie, looking at the long tables covered with their white cloths with red edges, the numberless spoons and forks glittering all along them, the silver tripods which Hafenkouker himself had placed at equal distances to serve the fish, the cellarmen coming up from the cellar bending under the barrel on their shoulders, which was immediately tapped, so they would only have to turn the cock when they were in a hurry.

"Sebald," thought he, "that is very well arranged; you could not have done better yourself."

But what softened him the most was to see Christian and Fridoline together, constructing pyramids of fruit,

flowers, and moss, to ornament the dessert-tables. Christian in a violet velvet Polish jacket, his black cap surmounted by a superb plume of green and gold cock's feathers, his little moustaches turned up, his lips purple, and his eyes sparkling with love; Fridoline in a white dress, a rose in her gracefully-rounded bosom, her hair carefully plaited and braided on her swan-like neck, her transparently rosy cheeks, and her long lashes cast down, moist with tenderness—these two children were looking at each other, blushing, sighing, and cooing together; while Master Sebald looked at them, and felt the pleasant days of his youth come once again.

“How they love one another—how they love one another!” murmured he, with his eyes full of tears; “God of Heaven, how can they love like that!”

Then, thinking of the past, he saw Grédel again as he first saw her, fresh, gracious, and smiling; and he recalled all the pleasant moments they had passed together—the birth of Fridoline, their joy, his wife's gladness, the delight of Grandmother Dick leaning over the little white cradle with clasped hands, murmuring, ‘Dear little angel—come down from heaven to be the joy of my old age—be blest, loved, and adored!’ Then he saw the baby, like a rosebud, and had he been able to paint he would have painted her every day, at every moment of her life; and this love of every instant made but one in his heart—his dear Fridoline. Then he looked at Christian, whom he knew to be a good, affectionate lad, and said to himself, “How happy they will be together—how they will love one another!”

And so his heart grew tender.

Then in the long array of souvenirs the image of his

old companion, Father Johannes, with his red beard, rose up also. He saw the capuchin nursing the child in the large sleeves of his monk's gown, and dancing her in his muscular hands, whilst his brown cheeks were ploughed up with wrinkles and his cracked voice laughed with satisfaction.

When he recollected these things he thought to himself—

“But I cannot marry Fridoline without his being there to give them his blessing. No; that I cannot—it would not be common sense. Johannes must come—why does he not come? Does he think my heart so bad as to bear him malice? Do I think any longer about the blows of his stick? Is not the white wine the cause of it all? Should I not be glad to see him come again? And so would Fridoline, and Grédel, and Christian, and we all. Yes; the capuchin must be here. If he does not come the whole will be a failure. Who can sing ‘Let us drink’ as he can? No one in all Bergzabern. In all Bergzabern? No one in the whole country round—no one in the world. Ah! if he came all would go well.”

And as he involuntarily turned his eyes towards the Trabans' gate he gave several deep sighs.

The tables were all ready. Dame Grédel, Hafenkouker, Christian, and Fridoline returned to the tavern, where many friends of the Mayence Ham had already assembled—Toubac, Hans Aden, Trievel Rasimus, Paul Borbès, Bevel Henné; not forgetting Omacht, the burgomaster, Councillor Baltzer, and a number of other personages of the town.

The crowd began to flow into the court. When Purhus arrived there was a noise like the rolling of a

tempest. It was the mob clambering up the benches. Master Sebald at that moment put on his famous maroon-coloured coat and his grand cocked hat; then with a sigh he opened the door of the old gallery and began gravely to descend the exterior staircase of the tavern amidst universal acclamations. The worthy man forced himself to appear as gay as he ought to be under similar circumstances; but he tried to do so in vain. It was in vain he held himself up, threw his great head back on his shoulders, puffed out his red cheeks, and crossed his hands behind his back. He was no longer the victor among victors at a cock-fight, nor at a donkey-race, and there even seemed to be a bitterness in his once kindly smile.

But the enthusiasm of his friends and acquaintances gave him as yet no leisure for regret, especially when he saw Christian and Fridoline coming up to embrace him. He smiled at Trievel dressed in her gayest apparel, whom Toubac's eyes never quitted for a moment, like a melancholy-looking kite watching a yellow old hen which he would gladly carry off in his talons, but which cares little enough for him in his cage.

Then, raising his cocked hat, he ceremoniously saluted Monsieur Baltzer, the councillor, and Monsieur Omacht, the burgomaster, who were present by right at every fête to drink old Forstheimer which cost them nothing.

Having done thus much Master Sebald thought he had sufficiently acquitted himself of all obligations of that nature, and taking Trievel Rasimus's two hands in his own, he said affectionately—

“Trievel, Trievel! the sight of you rejoices my soul.”

"I quite believe you, Monsieur Dick," replied the old woman coquettishly, ogling Toubac from the corner of her eye in the hope of making him jealous; "I believe you, he! he! he! I don't wonder at it; one knows how to dress oneself, thank God; one could find husbands by the dozen just now. If you had not been married according to the rites of our holy mother church, Master Sebald, I should choose you at once."

"Yes," continued the fat fellow, with much feeling. "It does me much pleasure to see you; you are one of my oldest friends, one I have seen more or less every day for thirty years; you are not one of those who could forget your old friends for the sake of pride and vanity."

"No, indeed," interrupted Trievel, "I stand by the Mayence Ham for life and death."

"Yes, yes, I know it," began Sebald—"I am sure of it."

Then, in a tone of profound indignation, he continued, extending his hands in the direction of the Trabans' gate—

"No one can now accuse me of impatience; if those who ought to be here are absent, is it any fault of mine? Who can now dare to say it is the fault of Frantz Christian Sebald Dick? If any one can say so he must be a scoundrel, for truth is truth, and I have always held falsehood and deceit in horror. Let no one now say that Sebald Dick has not had patience, and that he did not wait until the very last moment; but pride is the destruction of old friendship—yes, pride gives us many a fall."

Then he took three or four turns through the hall, muttering indistinct words to himself, and all the guests understood he was speaking of Father Johannes;

they were exasperated at the capuchin, and said repeatedly—

“He is a man puffed up with pride.”

Outside the uproar and the pattering of feet on the benches became louder than ever; one would have thought the old synagogue was about to fall.

Master Sebald stopped once more before the gateway, and exclaimed—

“He will not come, that is certain; I tell you so confidently, so let the banquet begin; my guests are growing impatient—we must sit down without him.”

Then getting more and more angry—

“How disgraceful! the whole country round will hear how his place was kept there for him, and how it remained empty! Is it not the greatest imaginable disgrace, not only for him, but for me and my whole house? and it is an old friend, my oldest friend, who treats me, Sebald, thus. As far as I am concerned,” he continued, after a moment’s pause, “I say nothing, for we are supposed to have quarrelled; but these children, these dear children, whom he baptised and carried about in his arms, with what can he reproach them, Toubac? Tell me, what can he say against them?”

“I say nothing,” observed Toubac; “what can I say? Only that he is a rascal, a beggar, a true gallows-bird.”

“I don’t say that,” cried Sebald, purple with anger; “we are not all blessed with every good quality; and the man who pretends that Father Johannes is not the best of capuchins, and the worthiest man in the whole country round, will have to answer for it to Frantz Sebald Christian Dick, mind you.”

Then turning towards the gate once more, he stoppēd for a moment, and then went on—

“I remember the time when my grandmother Orchel repeatedly told us that pride had been our destruction by means of a serpent, and that is the naked truth; the serpent of pride held the apple from the tree of knowledge; and this apple was, so to say, the knowledge of good and evil. Such has always been my opinion, and this day I see I am right, for Father Johannes, on account of his God of Jacob, thinks himself wiser than us all, and——”

That moment the worthy man turned quite white, then red, and exclaimed—

“Here he is! Ha! I knew he would come—I was sure of it—it could not be otherwise.”

Every one rushed to the windows; there stood Father Johannes under the gloomy archway opposite, making his way slowly through the crowd. Master Sebald, with open arms, seemed as if he was going to throw himself into the water and swim to the capuchin’s rescue. But the nearer Father Johannes came the more indignation did his lean and bony goatish physiognomy express.

Since his interview with Triebel Rasimus, Johannes had been rolling over in his mind the most terrible arguments possible against the divinity of the sun. He intended to vanquish Sebald and force him to cry for mercy; but at the sight of the ancient tavern, witness of so many happy moments with the glass in his hand and a smile on his lips; of his old companion, with his arms wide open and pleasure painted on his face; of Grédel, Fridoline, Christian, and so many of his old friends smiling and attentive in the shade, his heart

was filled with sadness; he would have exclaimed, "Remove this cup from my lips!" but his natural obstinacy, as well as his pride, got the better of him; so he marched on with his right ear forward and his head down, as if he was going to butt some one, while a tear trickled down from his left eye. This was not an encouraging sign; Sebald let fall his arms and began to stammer—

"What is the matter now? The capuchin looks very angry"

Johannes arrived in front of the tavern; at fifteen paces he suddenly stopped, half closed his eyes to hide his tears, and then with his nose in the air and his head projecting forward, he stretched out his hand and began—

"When the tribes of Levi and Heroboam were received in the tent of the venerable patriarch Sicheu, and having yielded up their sister Dinah to that monarch's eldest son, abused his hospitality so far as to exterminate his circumcised sons, the third day of the fever, it was a crime in the face of Jacob, and the Lord blamed their conduct. Now, I come not after that fashion; I come with no treacherous intent. I call to mind your hospitality, respectable Sebald Dick; nor do I forget that your dear child and worthy wife have a hundred times afforded me bread, salt, and a seat by the hearth of your esteemed tavern. It is, then, with sentiments of peace that I seek your presence. But the gratitude of the flesh, respectable Sebald, is one thing, and the fulfilling the duties of the soul is another. Why, then, have you defied me? Why at the sound of trumpets have you provoked Father Johannes? why have you solemnly called upon

him to defend the God of his fathers, his own God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why, I ask, has your pride hurried you to such an extreme? Here I stand, then, with sentiments of peace, but my loins girded up for war; for such is my duty, such my belief, such the command of our holy religion."

Having thus spoken amidst a profound silence—for every one in the court was listening to him—Father Johannes ceased, and Master Sebald remained for some instants with his mouth wide open, looking perfectly stupefied. Then turning to his wife, who was no less astonished than he—

"Grédel," said he, "did you ever hear anything like this before? Have I defied any one without knowing it? I remember nothing about it if I have. It is terrible—very terrible—we shall have the battle over again."

Father Johannes looked as if he expected a reply; stupefaction was visible on every face. Something serious was evidently anticipated. And while every one was anxious to hear Sebald's reply, Triewel Rasimus winked her eye, took her box from her pocket, and treated herself to a pinch of snuff. She then quietly went and placed herself between Master Sebald and Johannes, and said to them—

"Listen, and be not angry with Triewel Rasimus, for she has acted thus for the satisfaction of all. You are two creatures full of pride and obstinacy; rather than make the first advances you would both of you fret yourselves to death; such dispositions as yours are an abomination.

"What! two old comrades, two God-fearing men like you, are to quarrel for life because one has been drinking red wine and the other white! That is not common

sense. Now I, therefore, seeing things were so, went this morning and told Fathér Johannes Master Sebald defied him to come and support the cause of the God of Jacob; that moved him thoroughly, and he is come. Now, Monsieur Dick, you know you promised to grant me whatever I might ask. Well, then, embrace your old companion, and let there be peace between you. That is the wish of Trievel Rasimus!"

As the old stocking-darner was speaking, the jolly fat face of Sebald brightened up with pleasure; the capuchin's forehead lost its wrinkles too. They looked with emotion at one another; and when she ceased, the tavern-keeper, opening his arms, began to stammer, overcome by his feelings—

"Father Johannes, Father Johannes, are you still angry with me at such an hour as this?"

Then the capuchin, holding down his head to conceal his tears, mounted the three steps of the tavern, and threw his long sleeves round Sebald's neck, his cheek against his, sobbing.

And they both sobbed together like two babies, stammering—

"He! he! he! hi! hi! hi! what fools we were, what fools we have been!"

All the bystanders cried and embraced one another, without knowing why. Grédel kissed Trievel, Toubac embraced Hans Aden, and those who could not find tears said—

"I cannot find tears to shed, but I feel it more than those who can!"

Others blew their noses; nothing had ever been seen like it.

Borbès was quite ashamed at not being able to cry;

he went and hid himself in the kitchen, when Bevel Henné called him a paltry knave, and said his heart was as hard as a stone.

And he did not know what to say to excuse himself.

There was very general applause in the court, and in the tavern it seemed never likely to cease. At last Master Sebald lifted up his head, and laying both hands on his portly stomach, roared with laughter till the tavern windows shook. He could not contain himself, and Father Johannes by his side laughed too, like an old he-goat when he is let out into the woods when winter is gone by, and he smells the honeysuckle in the hedges—tears of pleasure ran down into his beard.

At last all was quiet again. Grédel wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, Christian and Fridoline began dancing, and all the company repeated in chorus—

“Ha! ha! ha! The good times are come again; pints and quarts, sausages and black puddings, will be the order of the day for the next generation!”

“Trievel, Trievel!” cried Sebald, “you had already rescued me from Eselskopf’s clutches, and now you bring my old companion Johannes back to me—you are the best woman in the world.”

Then taking Johannes by the arm, he told him how Trievel had saved his life; then suddenly interrupting himself, he said—

“But that is not all, my poor old capuchin; you always come at the right moment. Here, Christian, Fridoline, come hither!”

He had just finished speaking, when the bands of the Sour Herring, that of the Three Puddings, and of the Fat Ox marched into the court; they could hear Rostel-hasten calling out—

“Clear the way, clear the way!”

Then three taps on the big drum, cymbals clashed, clarionets squeaked, and an increasing clamour announced that the mob had clambered on to the roof of the synagogue.

“Christian, Fridoline!” continued the worthy tavern-keeper, “come hither!”

The two children approached in a state of agitation, and Master Sebald spoke gravely as follows:—

“Grédel, Johannes, Trievel Rasimus, and all of you, listen to me. This is the happiest day of my life, for, thanks be to God, I begin to recover my appetite, and besides, I have found my old companion Johannes again. For this reason I am well pleased, and it is my wish others should be so too; I wish joy to abound in my house, and that we should all live together like the birds of the air: pigeons, bullfinches, blackbirds, thrushes, and tomtits, who build in the same tree, some at the top, others lower down, and others again in the grass below, such as warblers, partridges, and quails, but all in peace together, singing, rejoicing, and celebrating the glory of the Lord. Our young people must also so come together, and produce new generations of healthy and happy creatures, so that the good seed may multiply before the face of Heaven, according to the word of the Lord; is it not so, capuchin?”

Johannes nodded his head, and Christian and Fridoline became as red as poppies. Dame Grédel began crying again, and old Trievel took pinch upon pinch of snuff.

“Therefore,” continued Sebald, resuming the thread of his discourse, “here are two young creatures who seem to love one another, and to be of accord in labour-

ing in the Lord's vineyard. My daughter, Gretchen Fridoline Dick, yesterday entered her eighteenth year, and Kasper Christian Diemer will be twenty-one next Christmas. What do you say to it? Shall we marry them?"

Then there was a great commotion in the hall, and Christian began—

"Oh, Master Sebald, Master Sebald!" and there he stopped, for joy was suffocating him.

"If we marry them," repeated the good man, "would you give them your blessing, Father Johannes?"

"They are good children, and I love them dearly," murmured the capuchin softly. "I will give them my blessing with all my heart."

"Well, then," said Master Sebald, "Christian, embrace Fridoline, your affianced bride. In a fortnight she shall be your wife."

As he spoke, Christian, waving his cap in the air, uttered a shout of triumph, and taking Fridoline in his arms, kissed her, and pressed her to his heart.

The poor child, in her confusion, hid her face on his breast. One would have thought they were about to fly up to heaven together.

And, strangely enough, the three bands immediately began to play, "*O mon âme, mon âme adorée*," from Mozart's *Flûte Enchantée*: either Master Sebald had previously given orders to that effect, or it was a special interposition of Providence on that occasion.

During the performance of that noble piece every one was silent; then the worthy tavern-keeper, in a tone of great feeling, continued—

"I give her to you to love her, honour her, and make her happy. But listen attentively to what I now say,

Christian, you must not abandon the noble art of painting; you shall live without anxiety, without troubles of any sort, with us, but a painter you must be. Men must always have some employment, and what can be finer than to reproduce the works of God on canvas, and in the colours of life? While I was in Holland I saw wherever I went their favourite taverns painted by very great painters, where they drank ale and porter, and made a great consumption of sour herrings and cod fried in sweet oil. You—you shall drink Rhine wine, and eat black puddings, and you shall be painter in ordinary to the Mayence Ham, the court of the Trabans, and the old synagogue."

"Don't be uneasy, Father Sebald," interrupted Christian, inspired with a sudden idea; "do not trouble yourself about me—I will be a painter; and there," said he, pointing to the lofty and smoke-begrimed wall of the tavern—"there all Bergzabern shall come to see my first performance; the verdant sides of the Braumberg covered with vines up to the clouds, the knotted stems bending with the weight of their purple grapes. Father Johannes crowned with vine-leaves as the god Bacchus, and you, Papa Sebald, round, jolly, stained with wine-ices, sitting on the ass Eselskopf, with his tongue hanging out, are going to take possession of the noble Johannisberg vineyards with your nursling. Your belly shall be in shape like a bagpipe, you shall be the good, worthy, and venerable Silenus, and all along the road you shall see inns, hotels, taverns, and wineshops wide open to receive you, as far as you can see."

"Ha! ha!" said the fat man, whose eyes were wide open with admiration—"a very fine design in idea,

Christian, and I hope, please God, you will be able to execute it as I picture it to myself. But now it is time to sit down to dinner—we will talk this over another time.”

Just then Saint Sylvester's clock struck twelve.

After the overture to the *Flûte Enchantée* there was one immense murmur in the court; all shouting had ceased, every one was in his place; the guests seated at the tables, the musicians on their benches above; the coopers, with their leather aprons, standing by the barrels; the female servants in short red skirts and short sleeves; the scullions and cellarmen at their posts; the crowd everywhere, at the windows, in the lofts, on the roofs, under the gloomy arch of the Trabans, and even in the turret of Saint Sylvester's Church, for Pétroupe, the bellringer, had let seats there at so much a head.

They were all waiting for the signal to begin the fête. Then Frantz Sebalb Christian Dick threw open the folding-doors of the tavern, and this vast spectacle met his sight. The court looked like an immense flower-basket containing the impatient crowd; the benches seemed to bend under the weight of the multitude, and the faces of all, young and old, showed the greatest attention. On the grand stand, erected against the wall of the old synagogue, the three bands were stationed, the big drum most conspicuous, while horns, trumpets, cymbals, and trombones glittered in the sun around it. On the highest bench in the stand four trumpeters were stationed erect, dressed half in red, the other half in yellow, blue, or violet, in the ancient halberdier costume, just as the knaves in the different suits are depicted in our present packs of

cards; they held long bent trumpets, with tassels embroidered in gold and silver, to their lips; their caps over their ears, and one hand on the hip, at a distance they looked like four caryatides supporting the roof. As soon as Master Sebald showed himself at the tavern door these four musicians began to blow the ancient trumpet call, sounded before Duke Rodolphe when he entered Bergzabern in 1575. The echoes of these strange sounds made one fancy the extinct generations of Bergzabern were about to reappear at the great banquet at the Mayence Ham.

The magnificent arrangements for the feast excited Father Johannes' admiration more than anything else; the three wild boars in large silver dishes, each with a bunch of fennel in his mouth, roebucks, blackcocks, peacocks with their tails expanded, woodcocks, pheasants, vases of flowers, pyramids of fruits, enormous painted soup-tureens, crawfish, and quantities of other dishes, added to which the glitter of the silver plate which rich old Sebald had taken out of his strong boxes for the first time—all that astonished and dazzled the capuchin, who sniffed up the smell of the soup and other hot dishes as he opened his eyes as wide as he could, and stood on tiptoe to see as much of the spectacle as possible.

The grand old chased tankards and long-necked beakers foaming with red wine did not fail to attract the attention they merited from him, and there is every reason to believe the worthy capuchin in no wise regretted having left his hermitage that morning, nor having bid a tolerably long farewell to his late diet of potatoes roasted in ashes.

Then Master Sebald, with his large grizzled head

uncovered, walked gravely across the court, leading Fridoline by the hand; then followed Christian and Dame Grédel, Father Johannes and Trievel Rasimus, Toubac and Bevel Henné—in fact, all the old attached friends of the house. When they had taken their places, all the other guests who had remained standing up sat down, and Master Sebald alone remained erect at the end of the middle table. Then in a serious and impressive tone he said—

“My dear friends and companions, and all of you, whoever you may be, either inhabitants of this good town, or even strangers to it, on this, the Lord’s day, we celebrate my happy return to health, for which we render thanks to Heaven, and not to Doctor Eselskopf, who is an ass; you may take my word for it; I tell you so, that every one may know it and remember it. We also celebrate our reconciliation with the good, worthy, and venerable Father Johannes, the friend of our heart, and our brother in God. Lastly, we celebrate the espousals of our dear daughter, Gretchen Fridoline, with the young painter Christian Diemer, and we give you notice that this fortnight you are hereby all invited to come here once more to celebrate their wedding, which shall be done in a manner befitting the well-beloved daughter of Frantz Christian Sebald Dick. And now, my dear friends and companions, let us eat, drink, and rejoice, and let us enjoy all the good things the Lord has bestowed upon His children.”

Shouts of applause rose to the clouds.

And Master Sebald, seating himself opposite the capuchin, plunged his ladle into the excellent crayfish soup.

CATHERINE'S SUITORS.



CATHERINE'S SUITORS.

CHAPTER I.



DO not believe there ever was a better kitchen or one with a larger fire in it in all Alsace than that belonging to the inn called the Carp, kept by Catherine Kœnig, in the village of Neudorf, near Huningen.

In 1812 Catherine was approaching her twenty-fourth birthday; she was fresh-looking, gay, and plump. It would be difficult to find a more enticing figure, the more so that she always dressed in the regular Neudorf costume, a wide skirt with red and white stripe, long in the waist, the corset ornamented with shoulder-straps, and her brown hair carefully brushed and combed, and confined in its rustic cap of black silk.

She was really very pleasing. Her chin, which was rather full, her rosy cheeks, straight nose, just a little turned up at the end, teeth as white as ivory, and lips

like a bunch of cherries, charmed you as you looked at them, and gave you an idea of abundance and satisfaction together.

Therefore all the big-wigs in the country, carriers, waggoners, who in those days were always going and coming between Mulhouse and Basle, in Switzerland, used to stop at the Carp. You should have seen how Catherine received them and made much of them, how she would tap them on the shoulder, with—

“So it is you, Andreusse! Ah, here you are at last. How long the time has seemed to me since you went away! Do you know, Andreusse, you are getting as scarce as a sunshiny day! What are you going to have? Breakfast? Yes, to be sure, we must wind the kitchen clock up. Here, Katel, Orchel, lay the cloth for our friend Andreusse. I happen to have a leg of mutton just done; you must tell me what you think of it. Kasper, put the horses in the stable, and the carriage under the shed. Don't forget it belongs to Andreusse; see the manger is full of oats. There, now, that is settled. Now you are here again I am satisfied.”

And she was such a good cook. They would not have gone anywhere else for an empire. When the moment came for paying the bill they did not dare to haggle about a groschen with such a good landlady, and then, to say truth, Catherine was tenacious about her old customers; she never overcharged them; her wine was always good.

“Now, gossip Andreusse, sit down and have a good breakfast.”

The waggoner would walk into the great room of the inn, where three or four of his fellow-carriers, who

had arrived the same morning or the evening before, were waiting for him ; their glasses tinkled, the bottles gurgled, and the leg of mutton dressed with garlic filled the house with its smell.

And this was the way Catherine carried on her business, this was how she received her customers ; whether their names were Andreusse, Jean Claude, or Nicolas, it was all the same, they were always friends and old acquaintances.

It is needless to say that Catherine, with her ten acres of vineyard, which were the finest and best cultivated of any on the hillside, her large meadow, called the Three Oaks, her flourishing inn, barns, distillery, poultry-yard, &c., with her sparkling but sometimes tender eyes and joyful laugh, was in no want of suitors round about. She could have told them by dozens ; it was curious to see them file in on Sundays and holidays, with the excuse of taking a bit of bread and a glass of wine before going to mass ; it looked like a procession.

John Noblat, the brewer, was generally the first, a strong fellow with a fair beard, who would take five or six turns in the kitchen, with his hands behind his back, thinking over a declaration which he never could find courage to make ; he would make all sorts of inquiries about the house, the vintage, about this and that, cough, take a side-look at Catherine, who would answer with indifference, and then he would walk off to the great room, saying to himself—

“ I will do it another time ; she did not seem in a very good humour this morning. I will see about it next Sunday.”

Then came Conrad Schœffer, the horse-dealer, in a

long grey woollen jacket, large hat, and pointed beard, bowing to the ground.

"May the Lord bless you, Catherine!" he would begin, squinting like a goat; "you are always fresh and rosy, smiling and contented. He! he! he!"

To which Catherine would reply—

"You are very good, Monsieur Schœffer. Walk in, walk in, your glass of wine is all ready; John Noblat is there waiting for you."

Schœffer hesitates—he would like to say something besides, but the presence of the servant checks him; so he turns his steps in the direction of Noblat, in a reverie, his great dog following him with his tail between his legs.

Then Michel Matter, the Tiefenbronn miller, walks in, wearing a sky-blue jacket, with his merry face and curly red hair, and his otter-skin cap on one side of his head; he laughs till the plates over the kitchen dresser shake again; he almost shuts his eyes; he feels quite enterprising at the sight of Catherine, and he calls out in a voice of thunder—

"Ha! neighbour, when are we to get married? Ah, ha! when is it to be settled? Ah, Catherine, Catherine, you keep me languishing too long. Come, now, once for all, tell me, shall it be next month, or Midsummer's day, or the week with three Thursdays?"

"Ah, Monsieur Michel," replies Catherine, "what are you talking about? I am sure you don't mean it."

"I don't mean it? Yes, indeed I do," cries the miller, taking Catherine by the waist.

Then she gets angry, and some of the others coming by, say, half angry and half laughing—

"That fellow Michel does not know how to behave himself—are those your manners?"

"Mind your own business," cries Michel; "you have nothing to do with it."

And that was a termination of his courtship too; he went into the room frowning, and cursing the women, who never know what they want, and they will always have the last word.

Michel Matter had hardly seated himself before his wine, grumbling between his teeth, before old Rebstock, the mayor of the commune, presented himself in his turn in the kitchen. Rebstock was the richest wine-grower in Neudorf; he wore a square-tailed coat, red waistcoat, and knee-breeches; his face was red, his nose purple, his head bald, with two grey curls round his ears. He took off his cocked hat, and stood at the door for a moment with an air of admiration, looking at the lofty brown beams in the roof, the great blazing chimney, the shelves on which the round-bellied soup-tureens and painted dishes were placed, and snuffing up the smell of roast mutton, or goose, or young rabbit, admiring the well-swept flagstones, and pots and pans, all shining against the wall; his face grew quite cheerful.

"How comfortable I could be here!" thought he.

Catherine saw him come in, but she pretended to be looking in another direction; she skimmed the broth, lifted up the lids of the saucepans, gave orders to old Salomé, while he watched her, fetched a long sigh, and cried—

"Good morning, Catherine—here I am!"

Then she turned round.

"Ah! Monsieur Rebstock, welcome; I did not ex-

pect you so soon. What can have made you come so soon?"

"What can have brought me here so early, Catherine? Can you ask me?"

Then he half-closed his eyes, coughed, and continued—

"Can you ask me? are you ignorant how I suffer on account of you? Ah, Catherine, my poor heart has never, never felt so much—not even in the days of my youth, when I was courting my late poor wife."

She looked down, and put on a schoolgirl's look while she put some salt into the soup. Then after hearing old Rebstock sigh several times, she added—

"Ah! Monsieur Rebstock, you are still the greatest deceiver in the village. We poor women, how virtuous we ought to be! Good Lord! Take care, Salomé, the mutton is burning!"

"Deceiver!" cried the old vinedresser. "You know very well my intentions are honourable. Come now, I am not joking."

When she saw a formal declaration was impending she called out—

"Oh dear! I forgot to tap the great barrel of wine, and this is Sunday! I beg your pardon, Monsieur Rebstock, but I must make haste. Come with me, Kasper; Salomé, you attend to the meat."

And she disappeared in the cellar.

Then Rebstock nodded his head, and said drily—

"Salomé, give me a pint of wine and a sausage."

Then in his turn he walked into the great room in a very bad humour, sending Catherine, in his heart, to the devil; but yet she had such a vineyard, such a well-established house, and such bright louis d'or!

"She must be in love with some one else," thought

he—"yes, that must be the case. Some young fellow without a penny, for certain; all women are alike—they only look at a man's face."

Thereupon the old vinedresser seated himself at the end of the table, against the wall, which was papered with views in Switzerland, with green mountains, blue vines, and brickdust roads.

Others kept coming in—Nickel Finck, the iron-monger; Zapheri Götz, the blacksmith; Jacob Yaeger, the head keeper; Joseph Kroug, Christophel Heuné, and I know not how many more; and Catherine had wit enough to keep them all back without reducing any of them to despair, for she cared a good deal about selling her wine, her sausages, and her white bread. On Sundays it was so much gained, and one must think of everything. Ah, she was sharp enough, and was naturally clever in seeing through men; she had made up her mind a hundred times not to marry, and one may say she was right. You had only to look into every home in the village, one after the other, to find out that marriage produces more blows from a cudgel than tit-bits, and chiefly for the women. The men make up for it at the public-house, but the women—good Lord! they must indeed feel a vocation for it to run such a terrible risk.

So Catherine was in no particular hurry to marry, and it seemed hard to pass one's life alone in the world. It is true, when one gets up in the morning to go to work, when the inn is full of people, the horses are stamping in the stable, some want their breakfasts before starting, and others arrive just at daybreak; when fires must be lighted in the kitchen, the public room, and in the private rooms; when one has to hurry

to the cellar to fill the bottles, to the stable to see the racks are full of hay, to give orders to the servants, men and women, listen to questions—madame, the baker wants to see you ; here is the butcher ; madame, which barrel am I to draw the wine for Jacob from ? &c. ; when one wants roast, another boiled, a third an omelet and salad—it is very true all that helps to pass the time, and one has only time to attend to business. But when evening comes, and one is tired of running about, when one's turn comes to sit down to one's dinner ; and again, when every one else is asleep and one goes up to one's solitary room, then, indeed, one's ideas often change, and one finds it very dull to be alone.

I do not know whether such ideas as these ever occurred to Catherine, but sometimes when she entered her room over the house-door at night, after setting her candle down on the table with a sigh, she would draw the curtain a little on one side, and watch the young schoolmaster Heinrich Walter as he sat alone in his garret under the gable on the other side of the street, opposite the lamp, as he studied some old books with red edges, and raised his great melancholy eyes from time to time from his book to the ceiling. She could distinguish his bed at the end of the room, on the right four shelves for books, and near the window a small deal table with an inkstand upon it ; all that seemed so dismal to her that it was enough to bring tears into her eyes.

Heinrich Walter might have been about five-and-twenty. God knows the pains he had taken for the last eighteen months to teach the village children orthography, arithmetic, sacred history ; to be civil and respectable, not to wipe their noses with their

fingers, nor to go yelling about the streets; not to steal their neighbours' fruit, nor to go begging along the roads on Thursdays and Sundays. Well, the poor young man could not boast any great success; on the contrary, the whole village was on bad terms with him; the women laughed at his old threadbare black coat, his battered cocked hat, his pale face, his old breeches, and darned stockings. At last they lost all shame with regard to him, and why? Because he happened to say one day to the children during school hours—

“My dear friends, if you go on as you do now, you all will be as great asses as your fathers and mothers; my predecessor, M. Imant, could never succeed in teaching them B—A, BA, and I shall never be able to get you to learn the difference between number 1 and number 2.”

It was a sad truth, these unfortunate children were as quick at counting on their fingers as they were slow at doing a sum in addition on a slate.

But from that day forward Walter had the reputation of being the most stupid, the palest and leanest school-master in Alsace. It had even been proposed at the municipal council to stop paying the two hundred francs which he drew from the commune—not exactly the right way, I think, to make him any fatter.

Such was the poor fellow whom Catherine watched every night before she went to bed, and, strange to say, the more she looked at him the less ugly he seemed to her; his white face, high forehead, with brown curly hair, his tender and melancholy lips, all had the effect of softening Catherine—everything down to his very short sleeves, whence his long lean hands protruded

and his hollow cheeks, and blue lines which encircled his large dreamy eyes.

"Yes, he looks gentle," thought she, "and good—and handsome too! Yes, he is handsome. I like him quite as well as Michel Matter, with his broad shoulders, or Jacob Yaeger, with his moustaches a yard long. They may say what they will, he is not an ugly man; he only wants to laugh a little oftener; if he swallowed a quarter of the liquor that Joseph Kroug or old Rebstock takes, he would be as fresh and as healthy as any one in the village."

So argued Catherine.

Perhaps it was the little lamp which set off Walter in her eyes; but there was one other circumstance which had interested her in the poor young man, and that was, Walter could not see her even at a distance without blushing, and often when she had been out during the harvest with her great straw hat on her head, with her sickle in her hand, and her rake over her shoulder, either reaping or haymaking, she noticed that Walter, from behind the texts and copies hanging in the window, thinking he could not be seen, used to stand on tiptoe, and follow her with a long tender look. Then she used to feel quite proud; her heart began to beat faster, and she would not even dare to turn her head round, but hurried on all the faster, to appear as if she had noticed nothing.

And such are women; this Catherine, who was so gay and laughed so heartily in her own kitchen, who was on such good terms with Michel Matter, Joseph Kroug, Nickel Finck—all the fine men in the village, in fact—was always dreaming about the large brown eyes and lean shoulders of a simple schoolmaster

and sometimes she used to hum an old air beginning with something about a pale youth and tender looks, and other similar nonsense. She would cry with emotion, and murmur to herself as she went to bed, "Yes, I am sure he loves me—yes, I am sure of it," which caused her sleep to be sweet indeed.

Nor was Catherine mistaken. Heinrich Walter loved, or rather adored her; his eyes were never tired of gazing at her; he thought Catherine the most beautiful, the most graceful, and most admirable of God's creatures; if he only heard her voice at a distance, the poor fellow's heart would jump. The idea of ever being able to be near her, or to touch her hand, had never come into his head; he, the son of a poor Hirschland woodcutter, without fortune, and with no other resource whatever but his poor situation as communal school-master, could he ever dare to encourage hopes so vain? He would have blushed at his own presumption, but for all that he was in love with Catherine, and he thought about her night and day, even during school hours.

The feeling was too much for him; particularly in summer, or at haymaking or harvest time, on those fine days when all the birds of the air are singing, when thousands of insects fill the air with their buzzing, and the heat is so great that our eyelids close of themselves; with both his elbows on the desk before him, and resting his forehead on his hands, poor Walter indulged in extravagant visions; he forgot where he was, and dreamed for hours together.

The school-children, with their red cheeks and staring eyes, might chatter, move about, yawn, sneeze, clamber over the benches in their sabots, in their impatience to go away—they could not rouse him. He heard nothing;

his thoughts were among the daisies and the thousands of field flowers waving their blue and white heads one above the other, in the wind; he was listening to the bees humming, or looking at the grasshoppers jumping around him in thousands; then his bosom glowed with happiness, in fancy he was breathing the free air of the fields; in the distance the short skirts of the gleaners were fluttering in the breeze, their wide straw hats blown back; their rakes were in motion in concert, and there was Catherine to be seen among them, slighter, taller, and more graceful than any, helping and directing them.

What attention he paid to this picture of his imagination, and how happy he felt!

Towards evening, when the great waggons loaded above their tailboards crawled slowly back to Neudorf, when the mowers with their shining scythes on their shoulders and their whetstones hanging to their waist-belts, with their shirt-sleeves rolled up, followed them, and the haymakers sitting on the top of the hay-carts like a nest of redbreasts sang in chorus to the melancholy old song of "Rinaldo," or some other ancient air of the same description, then, when he listened attentively, he could distinguish Catherine's voice from the rest, and to him it seemed like the voice of an angel in paradise; he dared not breathe lest he should lose a note, and then was the time to see him get up, and, standing on tiptoe, peep over the copies and texts in the window.

All the time they were unloading the hay-carts he never stirred, but watched and admired Catherine with raptures of delight. Then when she had gone into the house he still remained looking at the fine horses with

their heads hanging down, and the great oxen in the yoke with their eyes shut, and dozing as they stood there with the foam dropping from their jaws.

He loved the oxen and the horses because they were Catherine's; he counted the trusses and sheaves that the bright pitchforks flung into the loft, where old Salomé stood to receive them with open arms, and he blessed the Lord of mercies for all the benefits He showered down on Catherine's head.

And when the clock struck five, all the boys jumped up, snatching up their caps and their satchels, and scrambled down across the benches, calling out triumphantly—

“Good evening, Monsieur Walter—good evening!”

Then he used to look at the dial with astonishment, and mutter—

“Already! how fast the time has flown to-day!”

Then from the schoolhouse door he followed with his eyes the children running like hares and dispersing in the different streets, happy to be again at liberty.

“Happy times!” thought he—“happy times! and I was as happy as they fifteen years ago.”

He used to regret those bygone days, for to be hopelessly in love is, it must be admitted, but a sorry state of things. The week-days, however, were his best, for he could dream as he liked; but on Sundays, when he saw all the wealthy men in the village go to the *Carp* and take their pints of wine in the great room, then it was he suffered the most, and could not help repining at his sad lot.

“Good Lord!” thought he, “when one sees people fortunate enough to sit down in that house, look at *Mademoiselle Catherine*, and even talk to her, well

may they say some are born under a lucky, others under an unlucky star."

And that is the reason why Heinrich Walter was so melancholy. If he only knew that Catherine looked at him every evening as he was sitting over his books, if he only knew that already she did not think him ugly, and that she often said to herself, "Poor young man, he looks gentle and timid, I like him better than Michel Matter, Finck," &c.—if he only knew that such were the reflections in which Catherine indulged as she looked at him, he would have rendered thanks to Heaven for making him pale and lean, poor and melancholy, which had attracted the notice of so compassionate a person. But he knew it not, and kept his love to himself, not to excite the ill-will of the principal personages in the place, for they would assuredly have contrived his dismissal had they suspected anything. Besides, when he saw all the villagers looking stout and fresh, while he was so pale and so lean, he considered himself ugly and almost deformed. We all know that one must have fat red cheeks and scarlet ears to be considered a handsome man in the Brisgau, and without those charms there is no chance of success.

Now it happened that old Rebstock, as he went to his vineyard every morning early, noticed Heinrich Walter leaning against the wall of the schoolhouse, and so absorbed in his own reflections that he never noticed the people who passed along the road. Heinrich was accustomed to sweep out the schoolroom, light his fire, and put his pot on early in the morning. When he had done that he went out to look at the sun as he rose behind the blue mountains of the Schwartz-Wold; he listened to the quail calling its companions

in the barley, and the cocks challenging from the different farms. It was a real delight to him to see the larks rise in the misty sky as the pale light of day increased, and then to hear them pouring down their floods of song as they looked like dots in the air; and the dogs, who then crawl out of their kennels and prowl from door to door round the heaps of manure; and the first sound of the cowherd's horn, collecting his beasts near the fountain; then the cottages opening one by one, gossips scratching their heads and calling to one another, barefooted children in their shirts coming in and out like young white rabbits; and then the herd which comes along two by two or four by four, the goats leading with projecting beards, and their large pale eyes full of strange light, trotting and skipping along; and the poor sheep always baaing and complaining; then the beautiful cows and great oxen, lowing, with outstretched necks and open mouths; and lastly the pigs, with their round backs and curly tails, grubbing in all the filth they can find; all this confused troop of animals which hurry on or lag behind, and go fast or slow according as the dog is before or behind them; this whirlpool of dust which disappears by degrees along the dusty road in the purple light of dawn; all that was the life and happiness of Walter, for while he was looking at these things he was dreaming about Catherine; he pictured her to himself as always young and handsome, knowing nothing of his love for her, but accompanied by his good wishes through a long and quiet life.

Such contemplations could not be alleged against him as a crime; they hurt no one; but Rebstock, when he saw him in the same place several days in succession,

began to grow suspicious, and these suspicions notably increased when one morning he saw Catherine in a short woollen skirt gathering vegetables behind the hedge in her own garden. A long way off, for he was very clear-sighted, he noticed she rose from time to time and peeped at the schoolhouse, and as quietly stole a little nearer; he soon felt no doubt on the subject.

"Ah! ah!" said he to himself, "now I understand why Catherine won't listen to me; she is in love with the schoolmaster, that's clear!"

The old fox knew very well that women are all the more obstinate for being contradicted, and sometimes it puts ideas into their heads which might not have been there before; so he took care to make no observations on the subject, but he determined to get rid of Heinrich Walter.

And that was the reason why one fine morning, five or six days after, one heard the bell at the town-house ring to assemble the municipal council. It was about the beginning of August, during the grain harvest; so every one was astonished, for at that season they all preferred attending to their own affairs than those of the parish, and the council rarely met then. Notwithstanding, every one thought it must be something of importance, so they put on their Sunday clothes and cocked hats to see what it might be.

About eight all the members of the council were present—namely, Conrad Schœffer, Michel Matter, Christophel Heuné, &c. When they had all taken their seats, Father Rebstock rose, laid his cocked hat on the table, and with great gravity spoke as follows:—

"It was an abomination to feed idlers at the expense of the parish, people who remained sitting from seven

in the morning till midday, and from one to five in the afternoon, by a good fire in winter, and with the windows open to the fresh air in summer, while hundreds of hard-working people were shivering before their own doors chopping wood, or else sweating blood and water, mowing, reaping, and digging in the heat of the sun."

Then raising his voice, he went on—

"I refer to Heinrich Walter when I say this—to that individual who called fathers of families, and the best bourgeois in Neudorf, the least of whom are a thousand times better than he, a pack of donkeys. This has only lately come to my ears, otherwise I should have known what steps to take long ago. Who or what is this Walter thus to despise every one of us? A beggar who lives at our expense without rendering the least service to the parish.

"In former years we had at least the benefit of hearing the schoolmaster singing in the choir; old Imant, notwithstanding his great age, had a magnificent voice; but this fellow sings like a cricket in dry grass—we can hardly hear him; our poor curé is obliged to sing for both, and run the risk of breaking a bloodvessel, because this fellow Walter will not give himself the trouble of opening his mouth.

"And what is still worse, when people are going to their work in the morning, they can see that great booby taking the air with his hands in his pockets, and staring over at the Carp as if he expected larks already roasted to tumble into his mouth. He takes no notice whatever of those who are going to dig potatoes for him; oh, yes, such a great personage as he would think himself disgraced if he took off his hat to you. I am

surprised he has not asked for an increase of salary, that he may hire some woman to come and make his soup, cut his bread, and wash his carrots and potatoes. Now this must be put a stop to; we must ask for another schoolmaster, an older man, with good lungs, and a sensible fellow. We shall then have a schoolmaster good for something. But go and ask Monsieur Walter to earn the two hundred francs we pay him! I tell you we must ask for another schoolmaster, a married man—that is my opinion.”

Then Rebstock sat down, and as they were all in a hurry, they all agreed with him. Wendling, the secretary, drew up a minute of their unanimous decision, each man signed it, so that he could go to work again immediately, and between eight and nine, without having been heard in his defence, or for any fault of his, Walter was as good as discharged from his situation.

But the great news was only spread abroad in the evening, for that day nearly all Neudorf was in the fields, tying up the sheaves. Fortunately, however, Rebstock and the other friends of the Carp were not out of their troubles. One is quite right in saying that man proposes and God disposes; I believe men would do better to allow Him to propose and dispose without their interference, then they would not have occasion to repent so often.

CHAPTER II.



THAT day there was not a soul left in the house except old Salomé and her mistress; Orchel and Kasper had set off early in the morning with the waggon and oxen, and as the waggoners and carriers were all equally busy at home, the turnspit had a rest for the first time for the last three weeks.

It was so close and so hot that the shutters towards the street had been closed on account of the sun, and the windows in the shade looking into the garden thrown open to let in the air, which did not prevent the heat from being very oppressive. Catherine felt oppressed and restless; she did not know which way to turn herself; she went upstairs and downstairs like a soul in purgatory; she opened her presses, looked at her piles of linen, then mused, looked at old Salomé, who was dozing by the hearth instead of peeling potatoes, and occasionally half opened her eyes, took a good pinch of snuff, and then went on with her work.

At last, after an hour passed thus, just as the church clock struck nine, Catherine gently opened one of the shutters towards the street, and looked towards the schoolhouse. Walter was there, leaning with his elbows on the window-sill, and seemed paler and more absent than ever; he was looking into the street with an especially miserable air. After Catherine had contemplated him for some time in the shade, she noiselessly closed the shutter again and went up to Salomé, who by this time was decidedly fast asleep, and snoring like an organ-pipe.

A dusty ray of the sun just crossed the dark kitchen and quivered in the chimney and on the cat's back and ears, which was also asleep. Outside, save a perpetual buzzing, all was still.

Catherine stood looking at her old servant, then touched her on the shoulder and awoke her. Salomé opened her eyes as wide as she could when she saw her mistress standing before her.

"Ah, madame! I beg your pardon, I was fast asleep—it is so hot. I will make haste."

"No, Salomé, never mind," said Catherine gently, "I did not awake you on that account; I might as well have let you sleep, only—I want to ask your advice about something. I know—I am sure you are attached to me."

"Attached to you, madame! If you were my own child I could not look after your interest more than I do."

Then after another good pinch she put her snuff-box in the pocket of her apron, and asked—

"But, good Lord! what is the matter, then?"

"Come," began Catherine—"come into the great room, it is cooler there; bolt the door that no one may come in."

As she spoke Catherine bolted the door herself, then they went into the room where the benches and tables were hardly visible in the shade, while the holes in the shutters shone like gold. One of the shutters was ajar, and the large white roses could be seen swinging backwards and forwards against the wall. From time to time a bee came humming in the sunlight and then was off again.

This Salomé was a sharp old woman, who knew a

good many things; she had been married once upon a time to a certain hussar named Barabas Heck, who ruled her most imperiously; so she very quickly perceived something extraordinary was going to happen, and she almost guessed what it might be.

"Let us sit down," said Catherine, pointing to a chair, and seating herself on a corner of the bench near the window.

One could hardly see a prettier girl than Catherine looked just then, with her large blue eyes and timid air. The old servant pushed her grey hair back under her cap, and looked at her without speaking.

For some time Catherine remained silent, not knowing exactly how to begin; at last, raising her voice a little, she said—

"Yes, I am sure you are fond of me, Salomé, and that is why I want to ask your advice. You know all the bachelors in the village, young and old,—Yaeger, Matter, Schoeffer, John Noblat, and even old Rebstock—are always running after me."

"Ah! ah!" thought Salomé, "I was sure it was that." Then she said—"Good heavens! madame, that is nothing very wonderful, for it would be difficult to find two girls in the village, or anywhere near, as well made, smiling, and well-looking as you are, let alone your house and lands and——"

"True," interrupted Catherine; "but now tell me whom you would advise me to choose, supposing I wanted to marry some one; for living as I do, Salomé, without family ties, is very hard. Why should I work for nothing and no one?"

"To be contented and satisfied," said Salomé, "and to enjoy all the pleasures of life, that is certain,

madame. I have often been surprised you have not thought so before."

"Then," replied Catherine, "you recommend me to get married?"

"Of course, of course I do. You see, madame, marriage is a pleasant thing enough if you are lucky in your choice; for there are rogues enough about, God knows; plenty, like my old Barabas, to work you to death; but a young, good-looking man, who does whatever you like, takes you out sometimes to a dance—such a one, madame, is the pleasure of your life; in comparison with that the rest is not worth talking about."

They looked at one another for a few seconds, and then Catherine said, with an air of doubt—

"Perhaps you may be right, Salomé; but whom am I to choose?"

"Ah, that is a very difficult question to answer; it depends so much on colours and tastes; there are the dark, the fair, and the chestnut-haired, and the red-haired, the grey, and even the white-headed ones too, who are not to be despised, but they are rare, very rare. Now I would have nothing to say to either white or grey; like old Rebstock, for example, well preserved as he may be. And then you know old fellows are often stingy; they are often out of humour; they sit coughing in an arm-chair all day, seldom good-tempered, or so rarely, that it happens about the thirty-second of every month. Besides that, madame, the grey and the white are frightfully jealous; they see everything and distrust everything. No, madame, trust me, take my advice, and have nothing to do with the grey or the white."

"And the red?" asked Catherine.

"The red, that is another thing; they have some good qualities, but beware the stick—for example, Matter, the miller; well, I am sure he is not the man to stick at trifles with his wife if he had one. Now he is ready enough to laugh; he tries to kiss you; he is always crying out—'Ha! ha! ha!' Very good, I understand all that; my Barabas was red-haired, and he never spared me the cudgel. It is very hard not to know for a moment what to do to please them. And then they are as distrustful as the devil, just like the old ones; and what is worse, they are so treacherous; you think you may laugh, and then you find that makes them angry; they never say what they think. But still, if you have an inclination for Matter——"

"No," interrupted Catherine, "I never thought of him for a moment."

"Well, madame, you are quite right," said the old woman, "have nothing to do with red-haired men; Heaven keep you from doing so—it is the devil's own colour. But the brown, for instance, that is my colour, especially with curly hair."

Catherine blushed. Walter had curly brown hair, and Salomé saw directly that her advice was palatable; so she went on with greater enthusiasm than before—

"Curly brown hair! What a nice colour! Gentle, but quick, always ready to laugh, and good to work as well. Now look at Jacob Yaeger, the keeper, who comes every Sunday—I am sure that man walks ten or twelve leagues a day without thinking about it. One should always have a healthy husband, for good health brings good temper."

"Very likely," said Catherine absently; "no doubt

Jacob Yaeger is a gay, good sort of man; but a forester and keeper is always going about, and when one marries——”

“Ah!” said the artful Salomé, “I see you prefer the fair, and to tell the truth I cannot find fault with your taste. In the first place fair men always have tender hearts and blue eyes; poor fellows, they can see right into your thoughts. They are timid with their wives, and obedient as sheep; they are afraid of saying a cross word to you, and they have the complexion of a young girl. It would be saying a good deal to assert they are worth dark-haired men, but I believe they are even more affectionate. In fact, madame, you see it is difficult for one to make a choice between the dark and the fair; Jacob Yaeger is older than John Noblat, but good John——”

“Who said anything about John Noblat? I don’t care a bit for him.”

“But who can it be, then? Is it Zapheri Götz, the shoeing smith? Conrad Schoffer, the horse-dealer? Joseph Kroug——”

“No,” said Catherine, “none of these men please me at all.”

Then, with accents of the greatest tenderness, she raised her eyes to the ceiling, and said, with blushing cheeks——

“The man I could love, Salomé, must be a good young man, tender and rather timid, and who could love me as I could him; who would not think about money-making from morning till night; who could sing songs to me with a good voice; a poor young man, but who knows many things, and who would think me more beautiful than any one else.”

"But, madame," cried the old woman in amazement, "where in the world is there such a man to be found? There are none; such a man as you describe ought to have light hair—and wings too," added she.

"No, he is dark," said Catherine, in a low tone.

"Dark? Impossible!"

"Yes, quite possible."

"Then he must be coughing from morning till night; he must be pale and thin, probably ill."

Catherine could not help smiling.

"I was only joking," said she, rising, "and now you are taking all I have been saying to you quite seriously."

"Ah, madame, madame," said the old servant, lifting up her finger, "you don't trust me, and you are wrong; now I know who it is you love; he looks over here often enough, poor young man!"

Catherine blushed up to her ears.

"Perhaps you are mistaken, Salomé," said she.

Then, after a moment's consideration—

"And what do you think of him?"

Salomé was just going to reply when a heavy vehicle was heard to stop outside, and at the same time some one tried to open the kitchen door.

"Here is Kasper come home," said Salomé; "come, we must get the barn-doors open."

Then as she pushed back the shutter she saw the waggon full of sheaves reaching up to the first floor, throwing its shadow over the front of the inn; Kasper, Orchel, and the labourers standing by, with bare necks, their shirts open, and their breasts dripping with perspiration, waiting for the door to be opened; and the great oxen with weary eyes and legs wide apart and their shoulders up to their ears.

"Quick," cried Catherine, "run up and open the loft. I am going down into the cellar to get some wine for the men."


The house was soon astir. Everybody set to work to unload the waggon.

Outside one could hear the children at school drawing out in chorus "B—a, ba, b—e, be."

And old Salomé up in the loft, as she was taking in the sheaves, said to herself—

"Poor Walter, he little thinks what there is in store for him. Ah, that fellow may say he is lucky indeed."

CHAPTER III.

HE waggons were coming in from twelve to six; one was hardly unloaded before another arrived. It was hard work, but they had to make the most of the fine weather; the barn is the proper place for the crops, or the loft, or under a good dry shed; then it may blow, or rain, or hail, one can render thanks to the Lord for His blessings.

About seven work was over; the sheaves were stowed away like walls in the barn on both sides. Then Catherine ordered up a small cask holding seven or eight quarts, and Kasper, Orchel, Bremer, and all the men and women in their shirt-sleeves, with their cheeks, heads, and backs bathed in perspiration, came into the kitchen and refreshed themselves.

The barrel was put on the corner of the table,

glasses were soon filled and emptied ; they talked about the harvest, the good quality of the grain, and the approaching vintage, which promised to be very superior.

"Come, Bremer, Kasper," said Catherine, "another glass."

Of course they wanted nothing better, for we all like to please ourselves, particularly when we can do so by only lifting one's right elbow.

It was growing dark ; Salomé had just lighted the lamp, and most of the men were throwing on their jackets and preparing to leave, when Kasper turned round to his mistress, and said—

"Have you heard the great news, madame ?"

"What news, Kasper ?" said Catherine.

"Our schoolmaster is going to leave—the municipal council have dismissed him !"

At these words Catherine could not help blushing, and for the space of a minute she said nothing. Old Salomé was watching her in the shade, and as no one spoke Kasper continued—

"Yes, Michel Matter first told us of it on the road ; and then Mother Frentzel and her two girls, who were gleaning after us ; it seems they have had enough of him."

"Why," asked Catherine, "what has he done ?"

Orchel, Kasper, Bremer, and the rest of them looked at one another without replying, then Bremer called out—

"Lies and nonsense ! One must not believe what people say."

Catherine felt uneasy, for she saw clearly there was more to come. She went and dried her hands on the

towel behind the door, and said with an air of indifference—

“Well, and what do people say?”

Then Father Bremer took upon himself to tell her everything.

“They are going to send him away because Rebstock accuses him of looking over at this house all day long instead of attending to the school, and he says he gets up early every morning to come and stare up at your windows; but I know it is a lie.”

“Yes, it is a lie,” said Kasper, “and so is what Matter was saying.”

Catherine when she heard this grew redder than ever.

“And what has Michel Matter been saying?”

“Why, that you look at him over the garden hedge while you pretend to be cutting your cabbages, and it was time the other was packed off.”

“Ah, so they send this poor young man away because he looks this way,” said Catherine with a strange air; “they ought, then, to send me about my business too.”

“Oh, you, madame, you are the mistress of the inn.”

“Fortunately it is so,” said she—“very fortunately.”

Then there was silence for some moments, till Bremer called out—

“What a set of vagabonds there is in this world! But it is none of our business. Come, good night, all of you—good night, Catherine.”

“Wait a moment,” said the others, “we are coming with you.”

They all emptied their glasses and went away.

Catherine went up into her own room at once, and Salomé lighted the kitchen fire.

Catherine came down at night to supper and went up again directly afterwards. Kasper and Orchel went to sleep, and at ten Salomé followed them.

This is what took place that day, and you may fancy how indignant Catherine was, but her grief was nothing in comparison with Walter's despair; she was rich, she could shut her door in the face of old Rebstock, Matter, Schœffer, and the whole municipal council; but he lost his only happiness and his sole means of support at the same time and by the same blow.

The poor fellow had known it all since eleven that morning. Whilst he was looking at the children leaving school, as he often did, some of the mothers who were passing called out—

“A good journey to you, Monsieur Walter—a good journey to you.”

Then they went on laughing among themselves. Several other passers-by having saluted him derisively shortly afterwards, he began to feel uneasy. And as Wendling, the mayor's secretary, was returning home after having written the application of the municipal council to the sub-prefect, with his papers under his arm, and his shoulders up under his ears, Walter stopped him for a moment to know what was the matter. The little hunchback could not help looking at him with pity, and cried in his shrill voice—

“Monsieur Walter, you are young—very young. I say no more!”

“But what have I done, Monsieur Wendling?”

“What have you been doing? Don't you know better than I?”

“In the name of Heaven what fault have I committed?”

"No, no, Monsieur Walter, you may say what you like, you ought not to be surprised; it's your own fault—you don't know what men are; I was sure some day or other the mayor would ask to have you removed."

"Have me removed?"

"Yes, it is a settled thing, the decision is come to, and I have just written to forward the council's application to the sub-prefect. I am really sorry for you—you are a good fellow; but I repeat it is your own fault; it must have happened sooner or later. Ah, 'tis love, 'tis love," &c.

And the worthy hunchback continued his walk home, making indistinct utterances, and shaking his great head with an air of profound pity.

Walter saw him disappear, and then, pale as death, returned to the schoolroom; his knees shook under him, and he had hardly strength sufficient to bolt the door, and go up into his room holding on by the banisters.

"What can I have done?" thought he. "These wretched children learn nothing, it is true, but am I to blame for it? If the council sends me away, I am ruined; a teacher once dismissed at the application of a municipal council can never hope for another appointment."

These were Walter's reflections; he could see himself discharged, and returning to Hirschland to his infirm old father, whom he had been in the habit of assisting, and who would henceforth be obliged to live in misery; for to handle an axe, or saw trunks of trees, or split logs, he felt himself incapable—he was too weak for such rough work.

"What can I do?" muttered he, walking up and down his room in despair.

He thought he would go and see the mayor, or his deputy, or the inspector, and prove his innocence; and it was only very late, about ten, that he made up his mind to go and call upon the curé Dimories the next day before morning service, and ask him to intercede in his favour.

"Yes," thought he, "that is the best course to pursue; they will listen to the curé, and they may perhaps see the injustice of their hasty resolution. It is only right they should hear what I have to say; according to the regulations they are bound to do so."

He was sitting with his elbows on the table, and his head on his hands; notwithstanding his trust in the curé, a feeling of despair came over him.

Until that moment all his enjoyment in this world had been to look at Catherine and fancy he could see her moving about the inn, or in her own little room, or in the yard among her chickens, looking always smiling and gay. A presentiment warned him that all his troubles came from thence, but he had not sufficient strength of mind to regret his love for her—it was a sort of consolation to him in the midst of his troubles.

His mind was filled with the figures of old Rebstock, Michel Matter, and the rest of them who used to come to the inn every Sunday under the pretext of having a glass of wine, and then for the first time did it occur to him that they were all suitors for Catherine's hand; then he understood the meaning of the last words of Wendling the clerk, and cursed his unlucky destiny; he thought he should like to run across to Catherine and exclaim, "I love you too! They send me away be-

cause I love you—a look from you is sufficient for my happiness—let them take your land, your vineyards, all your worldly goods, and leave me my only happiness! The wretches! I am sure they do not love you for yourself as I do!”

And he leaned on the table, with his face buried in his hands, and burst into tears.

“No,” he murmured, “not one of them cares for her as I do, and she must prefer the man who loves her best.”

But again, when he reflected on his destitute condition, how he was crushed down by the rich men’s contempt, how ridiculous he must look in his ragged cloak and battered hat, he felt, as it were, annihilated.

He remained a long time in this desolate state opposite the lamp, meditating on the insolence, joy, and riches of those who have no heart to feel either shame or tenderness, and who do not hesitate to take whatever delights them without asking themselves the question whether they deserve it, and without any uneasiness as to the despair of other people.

“Happy,” he thought, “are they who have no souls, who are born without sense of shame; those are the earth’s masters; for them all things were created, while others want but a single flower to be happy! The others gather it, and there is no more said. Should any one offer them any hindrance, they wrongfully accuse him, cause him to be driven like a beggar from the place; all the villains are on their side, and they form the majority.”

Now, while Walter was thus weeping and lamenting, Catherine, who had just put out her candle that she might not be seen, was watching him from the little

window opposite; she saw the looks of despair he gave towards the inn, and divining the feeling of tenderness for her which possessed poor Walter's heart, she loved him the more for it, and while she pitied him she felt happy in such love.

At last, after a long reverie, Walter, recollecting he must be with the curé early on the following morning, got up, put out his lamp, and went to bed. But we can believe he did not sleep much, and that his troubles presented themselves afresh in his broken slumbers.

CHAPTER IV



THE next day happened to be Sunday, and all the regular frequenters of the *Carp* walked one after the other into the kitchen as usual, dressed in square-cut coats, red waistcoats, woollen stockings, and cocked hats on their heads, or grey or black beavers. They looked right and left for Catherine to pay their compliments to her, but she was not there. Kasper, in his shirt-sleeves, with his pipe in his mouth, was skinning a hare, hung up by its hind legs to the yard door, and old Salomé at the sink was scouring her pots and pans.

"Ah, ha!" they began, "what is going on this morning, Salomé? Is Mademoiselle Catherine ill, that we have not the pleasure of seeing her?"

Salomé, without even taking the trouble to turn round, replied—

"Ill? he! he! he! I believe not! No, Monsieur

Yaeger; no, Monsieur Matter; thank God, she is as well as you or I; the dear child, she never was better! Kasper, some white wine for Monsieur Yaeger."

So they went into the public room very perplexed, and sat down to their wine. Some talked about the schoolmaster's discomfiture, others played at cards; but they did not bring them down with their usual noise on the table, and seemed somewhat uneasy.

At last, about nine, Catherine came lightly downstairs. She had put on her short poppy-coloured skirt, pretty sky-blue jacket, and her little velvet cap, embroidered in gold, with long moiré ribbons. Catherine had not closed her eyes all night; many a time she turned about in her bed, not knowing what line of conduct to adopt; but now she had resolved what course to pursue, and all her natural gaiety had returned; she never looked so fresh, lively, and animated.

"Salomé," she said, "you must get a nice little dinner ready; there will be some one to dinner—I am going out now. I have something to do. You understand me?"

"Yes, madame," replied the old servant, with a smile which expressed a great deal; "you may depend upon me; your guests will be pleased enough."

At that moment Rebstock entered the kitchen.

"Good morning, Mademoiselle Catherine," cried he, opening his mouth wide; "how fine you are this morning!"

"Do you think so, Monsieur Rebstock?"

"Yes, Catherine, I do indeed!"

"Well, I am very glad to hear you say so! You

see, Monsieur Rebstock, I want to please some one to-day."

"You want to please some one? And who may it be?"

"Ah! that is my secret! You will know it by-and-by."

Then she turned her back on the vine-dresser, and went into the alley which led to the street.

Poor Heinrich Walter, in his long and ragged black coat, and his little cocked hat under his arm, had just come out of the school to betake himself to his friend Dimones, the curé.

Catherine called out to him, as he went down the steps of the house, with her pleasant voice—

"Monsieur Walter, Monsieur Walter!"

When he saw the woman he loved so much he turned pale, and his hand remained on the latch.

"Monsieur Walter," said Catherine, with a smile, "let us go inside if you please—I want to speak to you."

Walter was so struck that he could not find words to reply, but turned the key in the lock in silence. Catherine walked in, followed by the poor fellow, who could hardly keep his legs.

This is what the astonished suitors of Catherine beheld while flattening their noses against the inn windows, and now this is what took place in the school-room.

Catherine was very red; some courage had been requisite to take such a step, but one could see by the brightness of her eyes she was very well satisfied all the same. Walter was leaning against the desk, pale as death; he dared not look at her; he was hot and cold and could not divine what brought her there.

"Monsieur Walter," said Catherine, looking just a little serious, "I have a great complaint to make of you."

"Of me, mademoiselle!" the schoolmaster began, quite alarmed.

"Yes, Monsieur Walter; your imprudent conduct has exposed me to blame; for more than a year you have been looking constantly at the inn—everybody is talking about it. Yesterday one heard of nothing else but that in the village."

"Oh! forgive me!" said the poor fellow, clasping his hands; "yes, I confess I ought to have remembered that a schoolmaster—but I could not help it, mademoiselle. I was so lonely, so unhappy—my position is a sad one—that if I only saw you an instant in the morning it was a joy to me for the whole day. I little thought that could do you any harm. Good God! I am punished for it enough, for they have dismissed me—for I must leave this."

He began to sob, and big bright tears trickled down his pale cheeks.

Catherine, whose heart was melting in her bosom when she saw him in this state, continued—

"But, Monsieur Walter, I am not more cruel than others. I do not desire the death of a sinner—we are all weak! But if I forgive you, if I forget, what will you do to make amends?"

"I will set off at once," piteously cried the schoolmaster—"yes, if it should cost me my life, I will leave the village for ever, and you shall never hear my name again."

"And do you think, Monsieur Walter, that is the

best way to atone for what you have done? Do you think your departure hence will put a stop to evil speaking?"

"But," cried he, at his wits' end, "what would you have me do, then?"

"What should you do? Indeed it is not for me to teach you; but, since you compel me, Monsieur Walter, I may as well tell you—when a respectable man promises a young girl he does not run away, but he asks her to marry him."

The poor fellow, thinking his ears deceived him, looked up in her face; but when he saw Catherine smiling sweetly at him, her eyes beaming with tenderness, he felt all the joys of heaven take possession of his soul.

It was given to Walter to experience the greatest felicity man can know on this earth, when, without being aware how it came about, he pressed Catherine to his heart and their lips met in a first kiss. In comparison with such happiness as this, let me tell you all others are of small account, and if any one asserts the contrary, believe me, he is really to be pitied; for the good and merciful God created love for His children. Did He not say to them—"Love one another! increase and multiply! replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowls of the air, and over every living thing?" Now, since God has seen that it is good, what man can be so senseless as to find it bad?

Walter and Catherine had remained in that attitude for more than a minute, looking into each other's hearts, and thinking of naught else but the pleasure of

doing so, when a shadow in the window startled them, and, raising their eyes, they saw all their friends from the *Carp* watching them with long noses under their great cocked hats, and eyes as round as if they saw a ghost.

"Ah, ha!" cried old *Rebstock* in a hoarse voice, tapping with his finger against the glass, "this, then, is how *Mademoiselle Catherine Koenig* conducts herself!"

Catherine was a little put out at first, but recovered herself immediately and opened the window.

"Yes, *Monsieur Rebstock*," she said, laughing heartily, "this is the surprise I had in store for you—this is just the reason why I was so fine this morning; I wanted to please *Monsieur Walter*; he has been deprived of his little place through your ill-nature, and I shall give him a much better one instead."

And as no one had any answer ready, but all looked dumbfounded, *Walter* and *Catherine* walked out of the schoolroom arm-in-arm, and crossed the street. They looked so radiant with happiness that one might have said the sun was shining upon them alone.

In this fashion they entered the inn, and as the old servant looked wonderingly at them—

"*Salomé*," said *Catherine* joyously, "here is the master! We are going to tell the curé to publish the banns, and then we shall come home to dinner; mind it is a good one."

I might spin out a long story about the happiness of *Catherine* and *Walter*, but any sensible person can understand it. Three weeks afterwards they were married; the mayor, *Monsieur Rebstock*, was unwell

that day, but his deputy, Baumgarten, fulfilled his functions for him. Not one of Catherine's suitors was present at the ceremony, which, however, did not the least abate the gaiety of the wedding, nor prevent the guests from drinking to the prosperity of the newly-married couple. I leave you to guess whether the old Rangen and Drahenfeltz wines did not flow abundantly under these circumstances.



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